



Hall Farm and Oast-House.—Mrs. Price Doing the Honours.—Page 17.

Front.

THE CARTERETS;
OR,
COUNTRY PLEASURES.

By E. A. R.

With Illustrations by Thomas W. Dalziel.



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THE CARTERETS.



CHAPTER I.

THE CARTERET FAMILY—ARRIVAL AT THE HALL FARM—INSPECTION OF THE PREMISES—THE FARMYARD, CATTLE, POULTRY, PIGS, ETC.—PIGEON HOUSE—THE HOP KILN—THE DAIRY—THE GARDEN—HOUSE—MEADOW—COPSE—AFTERNOON READINGS—SOMETHING ABOUT POULTRY.

YOUNG people who live all the year round in the country, and to whom an occasional visit to London is an event, long talked of, and long remembered, will perhaps scarcely understand the delight with which a town-child gives up all the attractions of the Metropolis, its bazaars, exhibitions, Zoological gardens, panoramas, &c., for a few months' freedom in green fields and fresh air.

Mrs. Carteret anticipated and enjoyed the glad exclamations of her three little daughters, when she told them she had, with their Papa's approval, hired the greater part of a pretty farm-house, about twenty miles from London, for the three summer months; and as she looked at their somewhat pale faces, she felt glad that little more than a week would elapse before they exchanged the close air of a London house in June, for the sweet smells and freshness of the country. Mr. Carteret was a barrister, in good practice,

and he generally spent the greater part of the long vacation travelling on the Continent; his children meantime going to some sea-bathing place, which, although good for their health, did not give them that complete change and absence from the restraints of a town, which their mother now anticipated for them; and the prospect of a few quiet months in the country, was as delightful to her as to them; more especially since Mr. Carteret had arranged to pass the greater part of his holiday this year with his family.

"How delightful!" exclaimed Laura, the eldest daughter, who was nearly fifteen, and learning to draw. "How delightful! I shall be able to sketch from nature. I shall take down quantities of paper and pencils."

Her mother smiled, and said: "I hope, my dear, you will try, but sketching from nature is not so easy as copying. You had better, however, this week, ask Mr. Crayon to give you a few hints how to set about it."

"And how delightful!" exclaimed little Ada, the youngest of the three, "to be at a farm-house, with all sorts of animals to feed and to pet!"

"And what does my thoughtful Jane think about it?" said Mrs. Carteret, turning to her second girl, who was about twelve years old.

"Oh, Mamma, I am so glad."

"Well, then, if all are pleased, I too, am content. And now, my dear children, occupy this week before you go, in selecting such things as will be necessary to take with you, and in carefully putting away the books, clothes, and other little possessions that you leave behind; for as this house is to be cleaned and painted during our absence, I can have nothing left about."

The week soon passed away, and at the end of that time their youngest brother, Charles, came home from school, and was as pleased as his sisters at the proposed plan, only regretting loudly that his brother Hugh's

holidays began so late, that his would be nearly over before Hugh came home from Eton.

It was a lovely day in June, when this young and merry party, accompanied by two female servants, got out of the train at Bromley, and found a large open break, with a strong pair of horses, waiting to carry them and their luggage to their destination, a farmhouse in Kent, not far from the beautifully situated town of Seven Oaks. It was a long drive of nearly fourteen miles, and the dust was at times very disagreeable, but nothing came amiss to those who were determined to be pleased; and the girls found their large straw hats,—purposely bought for country wear, so convenient and pleasant,—because, whilst their eyes were screened from the sun, the air was able to circulate freely round their face, with its cooling and refreshing influence.

It was past six o'clock before they reached the Hall Farm, a charming spot, which had more the appearance of a gentleman's house (which indeed it had once been), than an ordinary farm. A short carriage drive, between evergreens and flowering shrubs, brought them before a capacious rustic porch, now covered with a jasmine in full flower, which scented the evening air most deliciously; a smooth lawn in front, laid out in flower beds, bright with scarlet geraniums, roses, and fuchsias, was terminated by a grass terrace walk, ascended in the centre by a few steps, and bounded on both sides by a thick belt of trees and shrubs, effectually concealing, on one side, the farmyard, with its picturesque but somewhat untidy outhouses; and on the other, the large green field, generally called the Home-meadow. The house, of red brick, was nearly covered by creepers, and with its two pointed gables and picturesque porch, was a very attractive looking abode.

All were delighted; especially Mrs. Carteret, who having engaged the place from the description of a friend, thought she could forgive many internal defects,

for the sake of the repose and beauty of its exterior. Jane, who was particularly fond of flowers, became quite excited as she descried a little conservatory adjoining a room on the right, which though not in the neatest order imaginable, was yet gay with many a pot of geraniums, cinerarias, heaths, and roses.

The farmer's wife, Mrs. Price, with a maid, was at the door to receive them, and at once welcomed the party into a long, large, but low-roofed room, on the ground floor; it had a broad latticed window at either end; one overlooking the garden in front, the other, the kitchen garden at the back of the house; the furniture was plain and old-fashioned, the carpet rather worn and faded, but after London, all looked fresh and clean; and when Mrs. Carteret said, "so this is our drawing-room, dining-room, school-room, and library, all together," the children, in one breath, declared "it was very nice;" and were equally pleased with their bedrooms, where great four-post beds, with white dimity hangings, filled up the centre of the rooms; very different from their own little iron bedsteads at home, but all the more welcome for their novelty.

Never was tea more enjoyed, or poached eggs and bacon more thoroughly appreciated, than by the whole Carteret party that evening; their long drive and packing and excitement, made them equally glad to retire to the four-post beds, where Mrs. Carteret was afraid her little Ada would be altogether lost.

How fresh and pleasant everything seemed the next day, when all were rested and gladdened by the sweet country sounds and smells of a glorious June morning. After breakfast and their usual morning prayer and reading was over, there was a general move in quest of hats and shawls, and a petition—"Mamma, you will come with us to see the farmyard and the garden and the dairy?"

"I will take one turn with you round the garden," said Mrs. Carteret, "but I have no time for more this

morning. I have got the Commissariat department to look after."

"What does Mamma mean by the Commissariat department?" said little Ada to her sisters, as they went up stairs for their hats.

"Those people," replied Laura, "whose business it is to provide provisions for an army, are called Commissaries, or they together with their business, the Commissariat, so what Mamma meant was, that she must go and order dinner, and provide stores for her little army of children. We should come badly off, Ada, should we not, if some one did not think of those things for us? And so would a real army, but for this body of men, whose employment is to find meat and bread for the troops."

As the whole of the flower garden was seen from the house, Mrs. Carteret's walk was not very extensive; but she prolonged it by going into the kitchen garden, as she said an inspect or of that was part of her Commissariat duties. She found it well stocked with vegetables and common fruits, and took the opportunity of enjoining her younger children, Charles and Ada, to respect their landlord's property, and not on any account to touch any of his fruit; such a caution she considered needless to Jane, who was scrupulous and conscientious; or to Laura, whose age and principles at once forbid transgression in this particular.

"And now," said Ada, "do let us go to the farm-yard, for I know Mrs. Price is going to feed her chickens soon."

A back way from the kitchen garden led them to the yard, which was now monopolized by poultry and pigs, the cattle having been long since driven out into the fields; the stable doors too were open, and their tenants away, with the exception of a rather pretty, quiet-looking black pony, in a loose-box, whom Charles examined with eager eyes, and expressed his intention of riding some day; but now Mrs. Price, a

tall, stout, good-tempered looking dame, about fifty years of age, appeared at the back door of the house, a basket on her arm and another in her hand. As she stepped out, there was a general rush of poultry towards her, chickens of all sorts and sizes, ducks, geese, and guinea fowl.

"Look, Ada!" exclaimed Laura, "what a charming variety of fowl for you. What a host of hens and chickens! Mrs. Price illustrates the Commissariat now. I see one of her baskets full of something!"

"Barley, Miss. I always give the poor things a little grain at this time; and, bless you, Miss! they know what I'm come out for, as well as I do myself—look how they are running in from all sides."

Little Ada was half inclined to retreat, for the chickens, so far from being afraid of her or her sisters, seemed inclined to peck at her toes; she stood her ground, however, and enjoyed distributing some of the grain which Mrs. Price gave her.

"What great ugly birds!" she exclaimed.

"These Miss, are the Cochín China fowls. People don't care for them now; I have got rid of most of mine; they are not good for the table, but their eggs are fine, and they are capital layers."

"And what are these large black birds?"

"Spanish, Miss. And yonder pretty little things are Bantams."

"And oh!" cried Ada, "what are those odd, pretty looking creatures, with little plumes on their heads? How smart they look, and how daintily they walk."

"Those, Miss, we call Polands. But look here, Miss, here's a beautiful hen and her brood of fourteen all marked alike."

"I don't see anything very beautiful in that grey hen and chickens," answered Ada. "The hen is a fine fat old bird, if that is anything—"

"Something, to be sure, Miss; but its the breed I look at. That's the blue Dorking, or, as some call 'em, the Cuckoo,—the best birds for the table out and out,

and such eggs! If I had my way, I'd have none but them blue Dorkings, unless it might be a Spanish hen or two, for their eggs. But my master, he likes all sorts; so the breed gets mixed; and though I have got fourteen young Dorking chickens there, the next brood may be all crossed. I am told now, even at Dorking, it aint easy to get the real true Cuckoo-breed, nor the white Dorkings either. Look yonder, Miss! that's what we call a barn-door fowl. A fine bird, isn't he! that rooster? The Dorking-breed has a toe more than the other kinds; if you look you will see."

"Will you let me come with you and feed the poultry every day?" asked Ada; "and what have you got that empty basket there for?"

"If you like to come along with me, Miss, you will see what I've brought this basket for."

The whole party followed Mrs. Price, who went into an outhouse, which she told them was called the hen-house; long poles were stretched across it, a few feet below the roof, and two or three upright sticks, with little transverse bars, like diminutive ladders, were fixed between these poles and the ground.

"There," said Mrs. Price, pointing upwards, "the fowls roost; and these perches are put for them to climb up upon. Now I am going to look for eggs," she said, as she went to a broad trough, well lined with hay, and stretched round three sides of the walls; here the hens made their nests, and here Mrs. Price looked for, and found a considerable number of eggs, which she transferred to her empty basket, marking the date on each with a pencil.

"Do you always mark the date upon your eggs?" inquired Jane.

"Generally, Miss; because, though I sell more eggs than I use, and those who buy them don't inquire whether they are two or three days old, I like to give folks a new laid egg when they want one, as well as to use them myself, in their proper turn."

From the hen-house they paid a visit to some

chickens cooped up for fattening, a sight that excited the children's compassion, but which Mrs. Price assured them was necessary, previous to their being killed for the table. Returning to the farmyard, they were just in time to see a boy bring out from the house, two large pails of wash for the pigs, a most nasty looking compound, full of the broken victuals and refuse of the kitchen, but which the pigs nevertheless seemed to enjoy immensely.

"Nasty animals," said Laura. "I don't wonder the Jews don't eat pork!"

"Nevertheless, Laura!" said Charles, "you enjoyed the bacon last night pretty well, I think."

"Well, somehow one forgets that bacon and ham are the same as pork!"

The children laughed, but Mrs. Price said, "it does not do, Miss, to inquire too much about one's food; there's ducks, for instance—"

"Oh pray!" said Jane, interrupting her, "don't tell us anything against ducks, for I like a roast duck so well—"

"With green peas!" cried Charles, "first rate! We must ask Mamma to order one."

This allusion to ducks made them turn towards a small field adjoining the yard, where a large quantity of ducks and geese congregated near a pond, and whilst they were watching them, a turkey cock who had been strutting unconcernedly about, began to feel irritated at their presence, and to swell out the pale coloured, shriveled looking skin, or membrane, about his throat, until it became a furious scarlet; and then, with tail erect and feathers ruffled, he gobbled, gobbled, and looked so formidable, that Ada certainly would have run away in a fright, if she had not been ashamed, and remembered the story of Frank, in Miss Edgeworth's *Early Lessons*, who had faced a similar danger triumphantly.

"Curious birds," said Mrs. Price; "hist, hist! go along, sir, do. Nobody's meddling with you."

The bird seemed to understand this reproof, for he turned round, slowly retreating; and as he went, the feathers became smoother, the tail fell out of its stiff, fan-like shape, into its more usual drooping form, and the colour in the full red throat, became paler and paler, until at last the skin fell loose and wrinkled about the throat, and the bird's furious mien was exchanged for a quiet, respectable-looking demeanour. Little Ada ran joyfully about, collecting the treasures of goose down, which, in little tufts, were hovering on the long blades of grass near the pond, or lightly resting on the smooth close cropped turf of the field; she soon picked up enough to make her doll a new muff and boa, and then turned to the feathers which were scattered in great variety all round. Whilst thus happily engaged, her sister Laura had been inquiring from Mrs. Price, the name and use of a strange looking building attached to the farmyard. It might have been taken for an ordinary barn, looking at it in one direction, but at one end two round brick buildings were attached to it; each of these terminated in a red tiled conical-shaped roof, surmounted by a large white wooden cowl, which veered about according to the direction of the wind.

"That, Miss," replied Mrs. Price, in answer to her question, "Is the *oast* house."

"Oast house! What does that mean?"

"It is a hop kiln. The place where we dry our hops, Miss. The two round parts are the furnaces, where the fires are made. The hops are opened out above the ovens,—when dry, they are laid in the lofts above to be packed, and when packed, they are put into the large place below, which you see, Miss, is open at one end like a shed. There is a cart or two standing there now, but at hopping time it will be full of long sacks of hops,—pockets we call them; and we call that open part our stowage place. Would you like to go into the house, Miss, and see what it is like?"

"Very much," replied Laura, "but not now, as I promised. Mamma we would not go into any lofts or odd places to-day without her. Another time, please, Mrs. Price."

"Welcome, Miss, when you like," answered the good dame.

"I daresay we shall be here," added Jane, "in hopping time, and then we can see how the hops are dried and packed and everything."

"I hope you will," answered Mrs. Price, "for it is a pretty sight to see the gardens in full flower, and a merry one to see the pickers at their work, when the weather is fine. We have a garden close by here,—as you turn out of the Home-meadow to your right, you will see the hops coming on nicely now."

"We must walk there this afternoon," said Laura, "for I don't think I have ever seen hops growing. But we have not half looked at your treasures yet. Where are your cows, Mrs. Price?"

"Gone out to the field, Miss, long ago. They will be driven home about four o'clock to be milked. But you shall see my dairy, if you please."

"Oh, thank you; but we must first look at the pigeons. What nice clean plump birds they are!"

"I don't know that they are so clean," said Mrs. Price, "but the old proverb says, 'Whiten your pigeons' house and pigeons will come,' and I have noticed they do like a well whitened house, and so we often make use of the saying about one's friends; meaning if your house is nice and neat, folks are sure to come and see you."

"Well," said Jane, "I never heard that saying before, but I am quite ready to believe that these pretty creatures are dainty birds. How fat they are. I hope you never kill any of them."

"Indeed, we do, my dear young lady. We should be overrun by them if we did not. They increase faster than any birds I know. Why, one pair will have six or seven brood in a year. I often wish I had

as many chickens as pigeons,—but then you can't be so sure of keeping them. I never lost mine, but I've known them leave a place in a body. But I will show you the dairy."

The good-natured farmer's wife led the way through her back-kitchen and down five or six steps into the dairy, a vaulted and brick-floored room, which, for the sake of coolness, had been made two or three feet below the level of the ground. In place of windows, thick wire-gauze blinds were substituted, which effectually excluded insects as well as the sun, whilst it permitted the air to circulate freely. There was quite light enough, however, for the little girls to see the rich-looking cream, in large red earthen pans, forming quite a pretty contrast in colour. Some delicious looking pats of butter were placed upon a white marble slab, and a capacious basket full of eggs stood on the shelf near, and now received in addition those Mrs. Price had collected.

"How delightfully cool!" exclaimed all three.

"I shall know where to come when I am hot," said Laura, "instead of trying to jump out of one's skin, as some one recommended. How beautifully clean too, everything is!"

"Yes, Miss, cleanliness is of the first importance in a dairy, so I trust *that* to no one; for I know if you want to have a thing well done, you must do it yourself."

"Why, that is Papa's favourite speech," exclaimed Ada.

"Is it?" said Mrs. Price, smiling; "then your Papa and I shall agree about one thing, at any rate."

"What large pans these are," remarked Jane; "they must hold a great deal of milk?"

"Not so much as you would fancy, Miss; because though very wide, they are shallow. If you look down, Miss, you will see there is not much depth in these pans."

"I see there is not."

"Mine is but an old-fashioned dairy, young ladies,

but perhaps you have not seen many dairies, or you would know that. Some people have large zinc vessels for the milk, and some have their walls tiled with white tiles; and I have been at a house in the west of England where they contrived to have a stream of water running through the dairy to keep it cool; but the old way suits me just as well; these pans are easily cleaned and dried in the sun, and if broken, easily bought again. And I flatter myself, my butter is as good as any about here, be it farmer's or squire's."

"It looks delicious!" said Jane. "I feel as if I must go and eat some directly. I suppose the chief thing in making good butter is to have good cream?"

"Certainly, Miss; but some people will never make good butter, with all the cows and cream in the world, it requires so much care and attention. First, the milk must not be tossed and shaken about, before it is brought in,—I am so particular about that,—but then, you see, our cows are milked so handy to the house, that there is no distance to carry it."

"I should never have thought that would have made any difference," remarked Laura.

"Oh dear! yes, Miss; the cream don't rise well if the milk is all tossed and agitated about; and then I like to have it poured into these pans before it's cool, when it is still warm from the cow; as soon as that is done, I lock the door, and never allow any one to go in that I can help. People take in dust and hot air with them."

"Perhaps we are staying too long, Mrs. Price?" said Jane.

"Oh! once in a way it does not signify," replied the good dame, "for that matter, but I would not have you stay any longer, young ladies, lest you should get a chill coming out of the hot air."

"This is where I churn," she continued, as they turned out of the dairy into a room by the side, full of pails, which had been scrubbed and washed until

the white wood of which they were made was as white as snow.

"Its no light work churning, I can assure you, young ladies; the butter milk must be all worked out, or the butter wont keep; but after all, 'nothing good can be made without labour,' you know."

"Another of Papa's speeches, I declare," cried Ada.

"Your Papa and I ought to be very good friends, Miss," said Mrs. Price, laughing.

"May I come and see you churn, some day, Mrs. Price?" asked Laura.

"And may I come to-morrow and feed the chickens?" inquired Ada.

"Whenever you like, my dear little Miss. And as to the churning, I churn every other day, when I have cream enough; so I will not forget to call you one day, when I am not hurried."

"When you have skimmed all the cream off these pans," said Jane, "what do you do with all the milk?"

"Our pigs and poultry get a great deal of it. And what we do not require, we give to our labourers for their families; their little children are very glad of it in hot weather, and of the butter milk too."

"Thank you, Mrs. Price, for showing us all this. I think we had better retire, and get into the garden again," said Laura.

"You are welcome, young ladies; you will find a nice shady seat under the elm tree; and Miss Ada can run about safely where she likes, as we have no dogs, only a little terrier, out now with the master, he will soon know you."

"I thought all farmers kept savage watch dogs," observed Jane.

"A good many does, certainly," said Mrs. Price, laughing, "but we are off the high road, out of the way of tramps and strangers, and the people around are honest enough, so we find Spring answer all purposes for us."

Laura and Jane thought it would be very pleasant to sit out of doors in the shade; so the former went in search of a book, and the latter for her work, and were just going out again, when they were met by one of the maids, who said to them that—

“As their boxes were now unpacked, their Mamma wished them to go and put away their clothes.”

“How very tiresome!” exclaimed Jane; “we were just going out to read and work in the garden. Cannot we put our things away bye and bye?”

The maid did not reply, but looked at Laura, who hesitated for a moment, and then said—

“No, Jane. I think we had better do it now, as Mamma wishes it. Perhaps if we are quick we shall have time to read a little before dinner, and if not, it will be much more comfortable to feel that our things are all put away, before we go to our amusements. We shall have plenty of days for sitting out and reading. Come up stairs; you know I am always for ‘duty first and pleasure after.’”

Jane, although very unwilling to give up her own wishes, allowed herself to be persuaded by Laura, who, fortunately for her younger sisters, always used her influence with them rightly. The good seed that Mrs. Carteret had taken peculiar pains to sow in Laura’s heart, was already bearing fruit; her right feeling on all points, and excellent principles, daily showed themselves; and there seemed, with the exception of occasional irritability of temper, little in her character to give her mother uneasiness. Mrs. Carteret’s great wish was, that her daughters should not only be well informed girls, and as accomplished as their abilities and circumstances permitted, but practically useful, and able to assist themselves; so that if at any time accidentally called upon to perform duties usually allotted to older people, they might not be found as helpless and ignorant as too many young ladies unfortunately are, of the ordinary details of domestic life. With this view, she made

Jane and Laura look after and be responsible for their own wardrobes, keep regular accounts of their money, and insisted strongly upon method and order in all their arrangements. Laura was naturally neat and accurate in all she did and undertook. Jane was careless and procrastinating; eager and persevering in any favourite pursuit, she never relinquished anything she once attempted, until she had mastered it, but she was too prone to think lightly of the less interesting, but after all necessary details, both of learning and life. As an instance of this, Laura had been learning German for some months, when Mr. Carteret promised her that as soon as she could speak it pretty well, he would take her to the Rhine with him. Jane was fired with a desire to learn German and be permitted to accompany them. She consequently borrowed "Ollendorff's German Grammar" from her governess, and having, with a little assistance, mastered the letters, studied it so diligently and regularly, according to the instructions for self-tuition, that when she thought herself sufficiently forward to join her sister's lessons, she found, to her great delight and the master's surprise, that she had really got beyond Laura in knowledge of the grammar, and only wanted the habit of reading with him to improve her pronunciation; but whilst industrious in one thing, she was often in disgrace with their governess, for lessons forgotten or not learnt; and often lost a pleasant walk with her mother, because her gloves were missing or wanted mending. The two sisters found their occupation lasted longer than they expected; the ample wardrobes, capacious drawers, and convenient shelves of their London home were not to be had here, and it required a good deal of thought and contrivance, to place in the one small chest of drawers the clothes required for immediate use, and to return to their boxes what they were not likely to want very often; they had only just finished their arrangements and

made themselves neat, in time for their early dinner.

Meantime Ada and Charles had been exploring the garden more thoroughly, and had penetrated to a little copse near at hand, which promised, as Charles declared, treasures of nuts for the autumn; they then surveyed the Home-meadow, now rich in colour, from the quantity of wild flowers mingling with the tall grass, which Ada was for rushing into, until stopped by Charles, who, from being at school in the country, knew how much mischief would be done by walking through the meadow.

"Ada, you must not," he said, pulling her back. "You will get into a pretty scrape if you tread that grass down."

"Why must I not? I only want to get those large looking daisies."

"You must not, I tell you. This grass is for hay. They will cut it very soon, I daresay, and then we shall have fine fun tossing about in it and making it; but look I can get you some of those flowers without going into the grass for them."

"Let us go back into the garden," said Ada, "and run up and down the green bank of the terrace-walk."

"Very well," replied Charles, "I suppose you are not going to do any lessons to-day?"

"Lessons!" said Ada, indignantly, "we are to have a whole month's holiday,—whilst Miss Murray is away,—we are to do nothing except read and work a little after dinner."

"Well, I thought girls never had holidays. If they don't go to school, I don't see why they should."

Before Ada could argue the point, an exclamation from Charles, who was leaning against the trunk of a tree, made her run up to him and inquire what was the matter.

"A discovery, Ada! a grand discovery. Something very delightful and charming! Guess what it is!"

"Guess! How can I? What is it? Where is it? How am I to guess?"

"Look up into this tree! Do you see nothing?"

"Nothing charming!—plenty of leaves, and fruit of some sort. It is a pear tree, I suppose. Is that what you mean?"

"No! Look again. Do you see nothing different from other trees,—something, in short, that does not belong to trees at all?"

"I see a great ugly iron hook sticking out, if that is anything. And now I see another hook, just like it, on that tree close by."

"Well," answered Charles, "that's my discovery. Do you know what these hooks are for? Why, of all delightful things, a swing! I am sure of it. They are just the height from the ground and everything."

"Oh, how charming," said Ada, dancing for joy. "Do let us run and ask Mrs. Price if she has the swing, and if she will put it up."

"No, we had better speak to Mamma first, and get her to settle it for us. Don't say anything about it until dinner time, Ada; it will be a surprise to the girls. We will make them guess what we have found."

Before long the two children were summoned to dinner. Full of mystery, but longing to tell their secret, Charles was on the point of divulging his great discovery, but when the covers were removed and a pair of fine ducks appeared, he could not help exclaiming:

"Why, Mamma, you must have heard us say we should like roast duck for dinner."

"No, my dear! I did not," replied his mother, smiling. "I ordered these ducks because, as we are some distance from the town, it was doubtful whether the butcher could send us any meat in time; but I am very glad that you all like them."

"How glad I am," said Jane, "that I would not

allow Mrs. Price to tell me anything against ducks. I shall cut you up, dear ducks, in happy ignorance of your bad manners."

This remark of Jane's led to an account of their morning's adventure, including the discovery of the swing, &c. Mrs. Carteret said she thought it would not be a bad plan if they were to employ their afternoon's reading hour, one day, in learning something about the different sorts of fowl, and promised to look whether amongst the books they had brought down with them, or amongst Mrs. Price's collection, she could find any upon that subject.

"You will, my dears, feel more interest in watching these little creatures, if you know something about them and their habits, however trifling that knowledge may be; and I propose to vary our usual historical reading, now and then, by subjects connected with the country, or suggested by anything you may see or hear. To-day I have still much to do, and cannot look up this matter, but to-morrow our afternoon reading shall be something about poultry."





CHAPTER II.

DOMESTIC POULTRY.

A FEW days latter, when this happy party were assembled together in their large cool sitting-room, for an hour's reading and working during the heat of the afternoon, Mrs. Carteret said:

"I have not forgotten my promise, and, thanks to our kind friend, Mr. Roberts, who has supplied me with books, I have been able to draw up a short account, and collect a few anecdotes about our friends of the farmyard, which I will now read to you." And opening her note book, she began as follows:—"When investigating the origin and progressive increase of creatures that materially contribute to our welfare and comfort, it is natural that we should turn to the East, for civilization began there; and there, in accordance with the will of a benevolent Creator, man first learnt to apply the abundant treasures of nature to his own use. From Asia, in addition to many important arts and sciences, we derive numerous creature comforts; and amongst her gifts of the latter kind, our domestic poultry may take a first place. These valuable birds are natives of Asia; and most naturalists agree in considering the Malay gigantic cock and the cock of Bankiva, as the ancestors of our common fowl. Both species are found in a wild state in the woods and jungles of India, but the former, a magnificent bird, standing more than two feet high, is

supposed to be a native of Sumatra, and the latter of Java. At what period, or by whom introduced into *our* island, are questions none can answer. When Julius Cæsar landed on the Kentish coast, he found geese and fowls plentiful among the ancient Britons; who, however, either from ignorance or superstition, made no use of them for food. It is curious that the first European visitors to the South Sea Islands note the same fact. They found fowls there, precisely similar to our domestic bird, but the inhabitants did not eat them, apparently ignorant that they were wholesome food; and Captain Burton, the explorer of Eastern Africa, mentions that at Ujiji, on the Lake Tanganyika, plenty of fowls and eggs were brought in by the country people, by whom, however, they were not eaten. In this instance we must attribute the abstinence to religious scruples, and not to ignorance, as the Arab and other traders freely used them. There is now scarcely a country in the inhabited world where these birds are not to be found in a domesticated condition; and there is surely no greater proof of the marvellous powers of creation, than the fact of a creature so important and useful to man, being adapted to all climates and lands without any change in its condition and value. There are now endless varieties of the species,—but all equally wholesome as food, and all producing eggs,—in a greater proportion than nature demands,—for the continuation of the race, giving us a constant supply of what we may term at once a luxury and a necessary of life, without any fear of our exhausting the means of reproduction. This is only the case with birds that are edible, all other individuals of the feathered tribe, lay just a certain number of eggs at fixed seasons of the year, sufficient for propagation of their kind; and even the domestic hen, in a wild state, seems governed by this law of nature, for instead of making a nest of twelve or fourteen eggs, and bringing forth a numerous brood, she seldom sits upon more than three or four at a time.

In all other respects, the habits of the wild bird differ little from those we observe in our farmyards. The cock exhibits the same courage and fighting propensities,—the Bankiva cock being especially sought out by the Hindoos, for this quality,—and the hen, the same patience whilst sitting, the same solicitude for her offspring, which has made her throughout all ages, a type of maternal devotion, and caused our Saviour to select her, as the most familiar illustration he could present of his love and anxiety for the unbelieving Jews, when he exclaims: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem; how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings.” * Whilst alluding to the well known courage of the cock, whose sole weapons of offence and defence are his beak and spurs, the latter not being fully developed until the bird reaches maturity, I may state that the cruel sport of cock-fighting is of great antiquity, and was practised by those nations who possessed the bird. Ælian relates that when Themistocles was leading his army against the Persians, he encouraged and animated his troops by pointing out to them the example of two cocks fighting. “These animals,” he exclaimed, “fight not for the gods of their country, not for the monuments of their ancestors, nor for glory, nor for freedom, nor for their children, but for victory, and that one may not yield to the other.” † On his return to Athens victorious, he, in commemoration of this circumstance, instituted the games called the “Contest of Cocks.” The cock has been called the Persian bird, in allusion to the absurd fable of his having in early times governed the kingdom of Persia. A character in one of Aristophanes’ plays is made to say—

“No lack is there of proofs to show, the truth of our
opinion,
That birds not gods, o’er men the kings and sovereigns were
of yore;

* Luke xiii. 34.

† Ælian Var. Hist. 11, c. 28.

And first, I instance in the cock how he the sceptre bore,
How, long before their monarchs old, the Persians him
obeyed,
Or ere Darius yet was born, or Megabazus swayed,
And so he's nam'd the Persian bird." *

We know him, as chanticleer, and the herald of the morn; he is supposed to utter his first shrill note as day breaks, but I presume that birds, like men, have opinions of their own, and some cocks certainly have peculiar notions about daybreak.

"I remember well," said Mrs. Carteret, looking up from her book, "when an invalid, and sleeping at the back of a London house, during the dark and cold months of November and December, being awakened every morning about four, by the noisy note of a cock, kept by some people in a yard or mews behind the house; my attendant and I agreed that he must have been brought up in the country, in the summer, when day does certainly dawn soon after four, and thus acquired a habit of early crowing, very disturbing to light sleepers; as if conscious of his mistake, however, he began again about seven, when light first breaks slowly over dark London in these winter months."

Lord Dufferin is very amusing about the perplexities of a bird he took to Iceland with him. He says: "A melancholy occurrence took place. I had observed for some days past, as we proceeded north, and the nights became shorter, that the cock we shipped at Stornaway, had become quite bewildered on the subject of that meteorological phenomenon, called the dawn of day. In fact, I doubt whether he ever slept for more than five minutes at a stretch, without waking up in a state of nervous excitement, lest it should be cock crow. At last, when night ceased altogether, his constitution could no longer stand the shock. He crowed once or twice sarcastically, then went melancholy mad; finally, taking a calenture, he cackled lowly (probably of green fields), and leaping

* Carey's Translation.

overboard drowned himself. The mysterious manner in which every day a fresh member of his harem used to disappear, may also have prayed upon his spirits."

The hen, too, has a language of her own, perfectly intelligible to all accustomed to attend to poultry. Her loud delighted cackle when she has laid an egg, is totally different from her anxious call or cry, when her chickens are in danger or trouble; and that again is quite distinct from the short quick cluck, with which she addresses herself to them when following her about the farmyard or field, she wishes to attract their attention. The hen, although naturally a timid bird, will sometimes gain courage enough to overcome her horror of the water, and when, as is often the case, ducks' eggs have been placed under her, she will, when the young brood, following the instincts of nature, rush to the pond, enter the water also, impelled by her maternal anxieties; but a writer has so well described her character, that I shall just extract a passage. He says: "The courage of the hen in defence of her offspring has been a common theme of admiration; the force of her maternal solicitude effects the most surprising change in her disposition and temper. Before she attained her matronly character, she was greedy, and always searching for food; fond of gadding about, and timid in the extreme. Now she becomes generous, self-denying, and intrepid; she assumes the fiery temper of the cock, and becomes a virago in defence of her helpless brood." An anecdote is told by White, in his *Natural History of Selborne*, of the punishment inflicted by some hens upon a hawk, which had at different times killed their chickens. "The hawk was caught and the owner gave him up to the tender mercies of the bereaved mothers. Resentment suggested the laws of retaliation. He clipped the hawk's wings, cut off his talons, and putting a cork upon his bill, threw him down among the brood hens. Imagination cannot paint the scene that ensued; the expression that fear, rage, and revenge

inspired, were new, or at least such as had been unnoticed before; the exasperated matrons upbraided, they execrated, they insulted, they triumphed. In a word they never desisted from buffeting their adversary till they had torn him in a hundred pieces."

The varieties of fowl most commonly met with in our farmyards, are the common dunghill fowl; the Spanish, a large handsome black variety, more esteemed for its eggs than its flesh; the Polands, pretty creatures, with their topnots or plumes; the Bantams, small, but beautifully formed birds; and the Dorking, which has this peculiarity, that it has five, and indeed sometimes six toes. The pure white Dorking fowl attains a great size, but is now rare; the grey or speckled variety, sometimes called the Cuckoo, being more frequently met with. The exhibition of 1851 introduced to us the magnificent looking Cochin China fowl, but this variety is now somewhat out of favour, for although its eggs are delicious, its flesh is coarse and tough, and unless taken very young, quite uneatable, except perhaps for King James' favourite dish of Cock-a-Leekie. Then we have a variety with a dash of the pheasant in it, to which bird, indeed, our poultry are nearly allied; but Java and China can furnish us with many additions to our collection. In Japan too, that curious country, there is, amongst numerous others, the Silk fowl; fancy a bird with soft white silken plumage, and crest and wattles of deep violet. Sir George Staunton the elder, amongst other Cochin China fowls, mentions one named the black "billed darter, so called from its propensity to dart its long sharp beak at any shining object near it, particularly into any eye turned towards it; on this account these animals are brought to the Turon market with their eyelids sewn together, to deprive them of the opportunity of discerning the eyes of those who come to purchase them."

As we have travelled to India to look for the ancestors of our fowls, it is but fair to inquire what the

far West has done for us; and we find that, about three centuries ago, America sent us a bird, without which no Christmas dinner in England is considered complete, namely, the turkey. The turkey cock has been called the bully of the farmyard, and like many bullies, he is not unfrequently an arrant coward, and is always more or less inclined to mischief; he will try to destroy the eggs of the female, to prevent the hen bird sitting; but, on the other hand, has been known to show great devotion to her during the process of incubation; and an instance is recorded by Bishop Stanley, of a turkey cock appearing so dejected when deprived of the society of the hen, that he was allowed to remain with her, and was found sitting with some of her eggs under him, which, when removed from him, he perseveringly got together again; until at last the owner observing this, had a nest made for him, with as many eggs in it as he could cover. He seemed highly delighted with this arrangement, and sat perseveringly, scarcely leaving his nest to procure food, until the brood was hatched; at the expiration of the usual time, twenty-eight young ones were produced, but the cock seemed so perplexed with his share of this numerous family, that they were removed, lest he might injure or neglect them.

In the South of Europe, near the Black Sea, turkeys have returned very nearly to the wild state; and near Smyrna, in winter, immense flocks approach the town.

"In their native wilds of North America," says Bishop Stanley, in his 'Familiar History of Birds,' "they herd together in considerable flocks, but like the original inhabitants of the country, the poor Indians, they are every year becoming more scarce; driven from their accustomed haunts by those who have taken possession of their land. Partial as these birds are to corn and buck wheat, they are very destructive visitors; and the farmers, with reason, dread their

approach, as fearful devourers of their crops. Though, on the whole, friendly and sociable birds, and fond of travelling together in flocks, a good deal of severe discipline is exercised by the old birds, particularly the males, who seem to rule over the juniors with a strong hand. The young males, called Gobblers, are compelled to live by themselves, for if they venture to approach their seniors, they are sure of being severely punished; and many are killed on the spot by repeated blows on the head.

"They frequently meet with great difficulties in their journeyings, in consequence of rivers stopping their progress. In this case they seem to hold a council, the old males strut about and gobble loudly, while the hens and young males spread out their tails, and make the most of their figures. At last, as if by common consent, they mount the highest trees, from whence, at a particular signal from a leader, away they launch themselves. If, as is often the case, the river is wide, these short winged, heavy bodied travellers, perish in great numbers. The strong, old, and healthy, generally accomplish their object, while the weak and tender, falling short, are hurried down the stream; but they do not in this perilous predicament lose their presence of mind, for spreading out their tails as a sail, they close their wings, stretch out their legs, and strike out boldly for the shore.

"There can be no doubt, that our European stock of tame turkeys, are descendants of these wild Americans; and yet it is remarkable that, train and keep them as long as you please, the wild turkey will still retain its original habits; and it is not unlikely that, if left to themselves, the descendants of our tame ones would in time resume the wild habits of their forefathers, like those which we have mentioned abounding near the Black Sea." The tame turkey is a difficult bird to rear, but when full grown is hardy enough, and will wander about during the day, finding and supplying himself with food; so that those

who have charge of them, do not feed them more than once, and that early in the day. The hen bird does not, however, instruct her chicks how to pick up their food, so that the young birds require a great deal of attention, when first hatched. The turkey has, in consequence of this incapacity, and other little traits, been called a stupid bird, by some people, and homely by others, but this last term, may certainly with more propriety be applied to that extremely useful, but very inelegant bird, the goose.

“Poor stupid goose, as we call you, how badly we treat you, figuratively speaking, calling you ‘stupid,’ ‘ugly,’ ‘awkward,’ ‘heavy,’ and ‘cowardly;’ and yet how could we now do without you? Where would our upholsterers find a substitute for your soft white downy feathers? and how should we all like to return to the reed pen of the ancients? or be confined to the steel pens of the moderns? How much you give us; and how little you cost us. Our waste lands, our marshes, are all you humbly ask to roam upon; freedom in the day, and a little shelter at night; seeking and finding your own food in the blades of fine grass, trefoil, and the weedy vegetation of marshes and ponds; for very little trouble giving a rich return; in short, as the poor of some districts express it, a “fat goose is a gift.” And so it truly is to them; the little urchin who can scarcely trot along, is competent to drive the geese out to the field or common, in the morning, and home again at night. Scarcely any outlay, and very little attention during the period of sitting, rewards the cottager with a dozen or two of birds, which will bring him his shillings turned into pounds; and if our poor had a little more experience or forethought, and perhaps a little more leisure, they might derive still more profit than they do from this portion of the domestic tribe of birds, for the goose lays many more eggs than it hatches, seldom sitting upon more than six or seven; and in France, where poultry has always been better understood, more attended to, and

with greater success, partly owing to a more favourable climate, they are in the habit of putting four or five goose eggs under large hens, and thus rearing a much greater number of goslings than we do.

In the marshy districts of Lincolnshire, and other eastern counties of England, large flocks of geese may be seen; to be counted by thousands, instead of tens, and these are reared and maintained chiefly for their feathers; the barbarous practice of plucking them alive being still practiced in many parts; it proves how very hardy the goose is, for, although there have been some instances to the contrary, most other birds, like a tree or plant stripped of its leaves, pine, droop, and, generally speaking, die, when deprived of their feathers. The old birds, who have undergone this operation two or three times, submit they say, to it, with a quiet fortitude worthy of admiration; but the young goslings, whose skin is tender, and feelings probably acute, suffer intensely, and do very often fall a sacrifice to this painful process. This practice is very ancient, and I sometimes wonder whether we learnt it from the Romans, who plucked their geese twice a year.

Our tame goose, is the common wild goose, the grey lag, or marsh goose, domesticated. It differs from the goose possessed by the ancient Egyptians, but is the same as the goose so celebrated in Roman story, for having roused the slumbering garrison of the Capitol, and thus saved the city from the invader. It is an inhabitant of the temperate zone, leaving to the Snow goose and Canada goose, the more northern regions for their summer quarters. It is migratory in its habits, like the two latter; its movements being, however, alternately east and west, and not north and south, as their's are. These travelling propensities of birds, are among some of the most curious of Nature's phenomena, and it has been found impossible by the most eminent naturalists, to determine the causes that influence the return and departure of many of

our feathered visitors; the annual migrations of vast flocks of wild geese, however, are easily set down to the influence of climate; the Canada goose, after passing the winter months in a southerly climate, takes flight in the early spring, to the vast fur-hunting regions of North America and Canada. Here the poor bird, led by the instincts and requirements of its nature, is most joyfully welcomed by the hunters, traders, and other scattered inhabitants of these desolate regions; a skilful shot will bring down many thousands during the summer, when they form a chief article of food in their fresh state, and are preserved for winter use, in a country where provisions are scarce, and man's ingenuity and activity taxed at all times to procure them.

But to return to our tame geese, though centuries have elapsed since they became domesticated, although they are as familiar with man and his haunts, as to form, at times, the most strange and persevering attachments to individuals, their roving propensities have been known at times to break out again amongst them; and in some parts of the south of Russia, the tame geese regularly take their departure in summer, to the lakes and marshes of a more northerly region, returning to their masters and their old homes regularly in the autumn. All animals are more or less tenacious of interference with their young, and the gander exhibits this quality in a strong degree, though easily daunted and frightened out of the impertinent hissing with which he greets the passer by, he is really savage and angry when he thinks his young or his females are in danger; in short, like many homely but uninteresting people, his family affections are very strong, and equally so his friendships. Like the duck, the goose will attach itself to other animals as well as to man, and a very touching story is told of one who formed a companionship with a house dog. "This bird, of the Canada species, would never quit the kennel, except for the purpose of feeding,

when it would return again immediately. It always sat by the dog, but never presumed to go into the kennel, except in rainy weather. Whenever the dog barked the goose would cackle, and run to the person at whom he supposed the dog was barking, trying to bite him by the heels. Sometimes she would attempt to feed with the dog, who, however, treated his faithful friend with much indifference. The goose would never go to roost at night with her natural companions, unless driven by main force; and when in the morning she was turned into the field, she would never stir from the gate, but sit there the whole day, in sight of her favourite. At last, orders were given that she should be no longer molested, but suffered to accompany the dog as she liked; being thus left to herself, she ran about the yard with him all night; and whenever the dog went out of the yard, and ran into the village, the goose as constantly accompanied him, contriving to keep up with the assistance of her wings; and thus running and flying, would follow him to any distance. This extraordinary affection of the goose towards the dog, which continued till his death, two years after it was first observed, is supposed to have originated from his having once accidentally saved her from a fox. While the dog was ill, the mourning bird never quitted him day or night, not even to feed; and it was apprehended she would have been starved to death, had not a pan of corn been placed every day close to the kennel. At this time she generally sat close by him, and would not suffer any one to approach, except the person who brought her own or the dog's food. The end of the poor bird was very tragical; for when the dog died she still kept possession of the kennel; and a new house-dog having been introduced, which in size and colour resembled that lately lost, the poor goose was unhappily deceived; and going, as usual, within reach, the new dog seized her by the throat, and killed her on the spot."

Many similar stories could be told of this bird,

whom we are pleased to term silly and stupid. It is as well for the tender hearted and humane that animals essential for man's existence should not exhibit the intelligence and sagacity of the dog or horse; for did they do so, one would find a difficulty perhaps in reconciling one's self to their daily destruction. The Snow goose is to the inhabitants of Siberia and other inclement regions, what the Canada goose is to the fur traders of North America. Thousands of birds, after being cleaned and drawn, are buried in the snow, and thus preserved for the time of scarcity. The region of the Himalayas in India, furnishes many varieties, differing of course in size and plumage from our tame goose; some approaching the swan in length of neck, others resembling more the duck in shortness of the leg; but all presenting pretty nearly the same characteristics—choosing for their food, berries, grain, rushes, grass, or aquatic plants; making their nests in the dry heathery tufts of common, or amongst the reeds and rushes of marsh or pond; annually departing and annually returning, with that precision and order that marks the migratory movements of other birds.

Although we have induced one or two varieties of the goose to settle down and breed upon the ornamental waters of our noblemen's parks and pleasure grounds, the common goose, so plentiful all over Great Britain, varies little except in plumage, like all tame birds, and in size—some places of course being more favourable to the growth of the bird than others. If we are to be guided by the images or effigies still preserved at Rome, the geese that saved the Capitol were small, so small that many persons consider that the bird so honoured for its vigilance must have been a duck and not a goose. I prefer, however, with many a learned authority, including Pliny the elder, to preserve the credit to the goose.

All that has been related about the attachments and friendships of the goose might be told of the

tame duck, who has been known to exhibit the same gratitude for kindness or protection, and the same devotion to men and to other animals. Ducks that have been lamed or wounded have been known to follow about those who attended them, as a dog would his master.

The duck tribes are very numerous;—birds of passage; they are to be found in every country of the temperate zones, and far north, even to the arctic regions. We might divide them first into two large classes—land and sea birds; meaning by “land birds” those that frequent ponds, ditches, and shallow waters, feeding on insects, grain, vegetable matter, &c., and spending as much time on the land as in the water. And by “sea birds,” those tribes preferring the coasts and deep water lakes, diving and feeding on fish. These again we may divide into wild and tame.

Many varieties of the former annually visit our Lincolnshire fens, and marshes in various parts of the island; some of these visitors have been domesticated and added to our farmyard treasures; but the parent stock of all our tame ducks is the common wild duck or mallard. And although we have now endless varieties of our tame species, who have not much resemblance to their wild connexions, such as the common white duck, the Aylesbury, &c., these birds will, at times, so far admit the old family tie as to consort with tame ducks who may be located in quiet places far from houses, and have been known to induce the latter to accompany them long distances up rivers, or into the fens.

We are accustomed, when we watch a duck turning up the soft mud of some unpleasant ditch, or revelling in the green overgrown waters of some uncleared pond, to call them foul feeders; and such they would be, if all that they, when groping under ground, or under water, took into their bills was swallowed; but nature has provided this bird with the means of separating or clearing from its food the refuse it

takes up with it. The broad flat bill is furnished on either side with a number of fine sharp bristles, or laminae, as they are called, resembling a delicate comb in appearance, and acting as a sort of filter or sieve, through which the duck, by means of his large sensitive tongue, ejects all that he does not desire to swallow. So delicate an organ is this large fleshy tongue, that naturalists have attributed the sense of taste to the duck, which birds in general are not supposed to possess. And it seems very probable that nature should have supplied this sense to a bird not always assisted by his sight in looking for his food, from the fact that certain nerves extend down the bill, which are not found in other birds—just as in the case of fowls, additional strength has been given to the muscles of the leg, to enable them to scratch up the ground, when searching for the worm or seed upon which they feed.

Amongst foreign ducks there is the summer duck, an American bird, that builds his nest in trees; there are wood ducks, and whistling ducks. And of the tribes that inhabit northern regions, the well known Eider duck, from which the light warm down, given to them by nature for protection from cold, is taken by man for quilts, coverlids, and cushions, where lightness and warmth united are desired.

The Eider duck may almost be considered a domesticated species, since it does not fly the approach of man, and is as useful and profitable to him, as any of the twenty-eight species visiting our islands, that we have succeeded in taming. It only migrates south from those very northern regions where the sea freezes; under other circumstances it is stationary, making its nest on the ground near the sea, or on islets near the mainland. It is in these nests the treasured down is found, which has been plucked by the bird from its breast to form a warm,

soft lining to the nest she has made of sea-weed and rushes. One cannot but admire the wonderful texture of the down, which whilst it furnishes to this denizen of frozen regions, the additional warmth required, adds no further weight or incumbrance to the bird, and has the same property of repelling moisture as the feathers, for the plumage of all ducks is furnished with a sort of oily secretion, rendering it impervious to water; when a duck emerges from a pond, we may see the drops of water rolling off the breast, leaving the bird as dry and warm as if it had never left the land.

When the first eggs are laid by the Eider duck, she is carefully removed from her nest, two or three eggs taken from the four, and the down removed. The bird begins her labour again; plucking more down from her breast, and laying more eggs; again is she deprived of her treasures, and again she supplies the loss. The bird is so tame and gentle, that she makes no opposition as the spoiler's hand each time lifts her from her nest and robs her; she recommences her work, and continues her endeavours to hatch her small brood of four, until not only is her own breast bare of down, but that of the drake also, who comes to her assistance, when she is permitted to accomplish her object in peace. Eider ducks are most plentiful in Iceland, and there they may certainly be classed among the tame birds, as they not unfrequently build their nests on the tops of the inhabitants' houses, and become familiar with the people. One bird is reckoned to give about half-a-pound of the down, and this and the eggs, furnish the Icelanders with two great means of support. In spring, and late winter, huge flocks of these ducks may be seen swimming out at sea, where they become graceful in their movements. They swim and fly alternately to long distances, but at night invariably return to their old haunts.

The Chinese, particularly the lower class about

Canton, who are half aquatic themselves, living almost entirely in boats on the rivers, devote great attention to the duck. They rear them in large numbers, artificially; the method reminding one somewhat of that practiced so successfully by the ancient Egyptians with their poultry. Bishop Stanley gives the following account of the process; he says—

“They lay an iron plate on a brick hearth; on this they place a box full of sand, half a foot high, in which the eggs are put in rows; the box they cover with a sieve, over which they hang a mat. To heat them, they make use of a particular sort of wood, which burns slowly and uniformly. At first they give them but little warmth, increasing it gradually, and it becomes a strong heat by the time the eggs are hatched. If the heat is increased too much, the young ducks are hatched too soon, and in that case they generally die in three or four days. The hatched young ones are sold to those who bring them up; and these try in the following manner, whether they are hatched too soon or not. They take up the little ducks by the bill, and let their bodies hang down; if they sprawl, and extend their feet and wings, they are hatched in due time; but if they have had too much heat, they hang without struggling. The latter often live till they are put into the water, which is generally eight days after they are hatched; this turns them giddy, and they get cramped, throw themselves on their backs, and die in convulsions. They are carefully fed with boiled rice, mixed up with herbs, and a little fish chopped small.

“When they are older, they are moved into a large floating pen, called a sampane, which has a broad bottom of bamboo, with a gallery round, above the river, and a bridge declining towards the water. An old experienced step-mother is provided to lead them down, and attend them when feeding; these old birds are so well trained, that at the given signal in the

evening, they return in the utmost haste with their young broods.

"This signal is a whistle, on the sound of which the whole flock sets itself in motion, waddling in regular order towards their boat. The first duck that enters is rewarded with some favourite food; the last is whipped as an idler; so that it is a comical sight to see the last birds, as if knowing what will happen to the last of all, making efforts to fly over the backs of others, and get on board the boat in time to escape punishment."

One little word about pigeons. Our tame ones are all derived from the Rock-dove; a bird that seeks the coast, and homes itself in the holes of cliffs and rocks; the warmer temperature of the sea-coast, doubtless, attracts it, but chiefly the power of obtaining carbonate of lime from the shells of the sea beach. This, the instinct of the bird tells it, is necessary, or the shells of the numerous eggs it produces in the year would not be hard enough; and for the same reason, our tame pigeons flock to the white-washed house, which supplies the lime to them, and not because the love of cleanliness is greater in them than in other birds. But of all our domesticated birds, our pigeons are perhaps the least entitled to be so considered. Although nesting in our dove-cots, and flying about our farmyards, they scarcely change their original habits; the scene is different, the rocky coast and quiet homestead have to us nothing in common, but the holes in the rock and those in the house assume much the same character to these gregarious birds that are free to fly about and seek their food; free to come, and free to go as they list; who can control their airy motions as they wheel aloft? and who can restrain them from departing? if, as they often do, from some secret reason of their own, they one day desert their old home, and refuse all inducements to return and people it again. Happily they are those we can best spare; we should be less easily

consoled if our geese and fowls were to take these freaks into their heads; but the Beneficent Creator, in forming the latter bird, seems to have had specially in view its adaptation to a domestic condition. Unlike the pigeon, whose marvellous powers of flight, excite our admiration and surprise, the common fowl, from its short wings and heavy body, is incapable of sustaining a long or continuous flight; and it rarely, if ever attempts it; if alarmed, it will use its wings to assist it in running, but on all other occasions is content to strut about the narrow precincts of a farmyard domain, seldom venturing more than one field away, invariably returning to the vicinity of its master's abode; in short, a very willing prisoner.





CHAPTER III.

THE SWING—THE GREENHOUSE—A WALK TO THE TOWN—
THE HOP GARDEN—SEVEN OAKS—THE VINE—CRICKET—A
TRUE STORY—THE ALMSHOUSES.

WHEN Mrs. Price was asked about the swing, she said she certainly had a very nice swing ready to put up, the seat being nicely stuffed, and covered with leather, the ropes padded and covered just where the hands would be placed, but as some children who were staying there before had met with more than one serious fall, she had determined never to put it up again, unless requested to do so by the parents.

Mrs. Carteret replied that she thought her children were now old enough to take care of themselves, with the exception, perhaps, of Ada, whom she desired should never swing unless Laura, or she herself were present. As for Charles, as a boy, it was desirable that he should, to a certain extent, be familiarized with dangerous sports, and thus learn by experience the consequence of rashness, and that caution is not inconsistent with boldness and courage. The swing was accordingly put up, and having been properly tested as to its security and strength, by Mr. Price himself (who was a very stout man, swinging in it), afforded the greatest delight and pleasure to the whole party, not excepting the sedate Laura; and generally after breakfast there was a great rush to see who should first get hat and shoes on, and be off to the swing. Jane was rarely, if ever, in time, for either her hat



Ada in the Swing.—Page 46.

wanted a string, or her boot-lace was broken, or some trifle, forgot at its proper time, detained her; but she was good-natured, and good-tempered, and conscious that it was her own fault if she had to wait for her swing until the rest were tired. She did not complain, but consoled herself by taking some favourite book, and swinging herself to and fro whilst she read. Very soon, however, she found something to do, which quite superseded this amusement with her, and of which she became so fond, that she tried hard to remember to put by gloves, hat, and shoes where she could find them again; and to do everything she had to do in proper time, so as not to be kept in after breakfast. This occupation was the watering and attending to the plants in Mrs. Price's little conservatory. Observing how neglected they looked, and how untidy the place was, she asked Mrs. Price one day, whether she might water them and take them under her charge, as she had been in the habit of doing in London, with the few geraniums and heaths her Mamma gave her there.

"With all my heart," answered Mrs. Price; "neither I nor the master have time to attend to such things—we found the conservatory here when we came, and we keep our plants in it in the winter, for it is nicely contrived to be heated by our sitting-room fire, or we should not have had it, of course. You see, Miss, this place was a gentleman's house, and has more garden than farming people like us care for; but we get a man once a week to touch it up, and somehow the flowers seem to do well here. I suppose it is the stuff from the yard that the master has put upon it; but a gentleman who was here a week come yesterday, said he never saw finer scarlet geraniums any where than our'n."

Mrs. Price was always communicative when the opportunity occurred, and she ran on for a long time, giving Jane the history of the last possessor of the house, &c., but she listened patiently, glad of the per-

mission given to take these beloved flowers under her own care.

She ran into the house, first to look for an old pair of gloves, suited for gardening, and then joyously set to work, and cut off the dead flowers and leaves, clearing each pot from weeds and moss, stirring the soil carefully, and putting sticks for props where they were required. All this was well-known, and welcome labour to her; for in London she looked after her half dozen treasured plants most assiduously, carefully washing the leaves from the flakes and dust, and carrying them to the sun, from room to room; and so successful was she that the plants lived and flourished, whilst others died; and when the man came to change the flowers in her Mamma's stand in the drawing-room, he often remarked upon the "young lady's" plants, and wished his customers were as careful of his as she was of her's.

Jane never would change her geraniums for others; it was her pride to preserve them through the winter, and it was only when an old plant was fairly worn out that she would consent to part with it. She had felt a sort of compassionate regret at seeing Mrs. Price's plants so little tended, and at last summoned courage to make her request about them. The floor of the conservatory was in a fine state of litter and confusion, with dead leaves, &c.; when, after a good hour's work, she had restored the plants to something like neatness, Mrs. Carteret came out and watched her proceedings with interest.

"Before you water your plants, Jane, I advise you to sweep the floor of the conservatory out."

"Very well, Mamma; but what shall I do for a broom?"

"A besom, you mean, my dear. I dare say you will find one in the little shed where the garden tools are kept. Here, Charles, you run and look for a besom, for your sister."

Charles not only found one, but undertook to

sweep out the house for her, which he soon did, and then fetched the wheelbarrow to carry away the rubbish. How different the little conservatory looked! Jane was delighted at the alteration her work had effected, although some of the geraniums looked rather forlorn, for when the dead leaves were cleared away few green ones appeared.

"Never mind," said Jane, "in a week or so, with judicious watering and attention, you will see how they will sprout out."

The judicious watering was not so easy a matter, for the watering pots were all large and cumbersome, and Jane decided she must have one with a fine rose, like her London one, at once. Mrs. Carteret promised her that she would, if possible, walk to Seven Oaks the next day, in order to procure one. It was astonishing how blooming and fresh the plants became after a week or so of Jane's care. Her constant and regular attention to them, the fresh soil supplied to the pots, the free admittance of the warm summer air, by opening the windows early, and carefully closing them at night; all these little duties, never forgotten, and punctually performed, transformed sickly plants into healthy ones, and proved what has often been said, that plants, like children, must be tended not only by a careful, but by a loving hand.

Mrs. Price was charmed, and made her servant wash out the flags of the conservatory every week, because she thought it would give pleasure to Jane.

"Ah, Ma'am," said she to Mrs. Carteret, "if all young people were like your's, one would not be so afraid of letting one's rooms where there are children."

"My children," replied Mrs. Carteret, "are surely too old now to do much mischief; but Charles and Ada, I am afraid, Mrs. Price, are not quite perfect in that respect."

"Indeed, Ma'am, you don't know what mischievous children are. Why, I had a family here, with three

boys, fine noble-looking boys they were too; but Master Louis, Ma'am, would go into my dairy, mix all the cream, and, if Cook's back was turned, put all the pepper into the salt, then chase the poultry about, until, at last, one day, the old turkey cock turned round and flew at him. I wasn't sorry, I assure you, for he never troubled my chickens again. There was no curing him; his father flogged him, and the master, too, took him in hand one day, when he cut down a hundred head of cabbage."

"A very shocking boy, indeed," said Mrs. Carteret. "Pray, what has become of him?"

"Well, they sent him away to sea, and he is now in the navy somewhere. His brothers behaved better after he went away, I heard."

"The best thing to do with him, certainly. I can forgive the mischief that results from the thoughtlessness of high spirits and fun; but wanton destruction of another person's property, I would always punish severely."

The next morning, being a bright and beautiful day, with a gentle breeze blowing, enough to stir the air and prevent the heat being oppressive, Mrs. Carteret told her children, at breakfast, that she thought it was just the weather for a long walk, so that the sooner they started the better. "In half-an-hour's time," she added, "I shall be ready, and hope that none of you will keep me waiting."

Ada instantly set off to her usual employment of feeding the chickens with Mrs. Price. Laura sat down to finish a letter to her Papa, that she might take it to the post with her. Jane departed to her dear flowers: here, engrossed with her duties to them, she forgot all about time, until Laura and Ada entered the conservatory, ready dressed for their walk, and exclaimed, "What, Jane, not gone up stairs yet? Why, Ma'ma will be down in a moment, and you know she will not wait, because she gave us due notice."

"What shall I do?" cried Jane. "I will be as

quick as I can. I will run after you; do, please, walk very slowly."

With all her haste she was not quick enough to join them before they left. Unfortunately, just as she had reached the garden door, she remembered she had forgotten her purse, and she had to run back to fetch it. She always kept it in a little drawer, with her gloves, handkerchiefs, and other trifles; and this drawer, in her hurry to get dressed in time, she had turned quite topsy turvey, when searching for her gloves; her purse was therefore not in its usual place, and she looked here and there for it in vain; first under one thing, then under the other, until, at last, she began to think it could not be there at all, and was nearly beginning to cry with vexation, heat, and worry; but making one last effort, she pulled everything out of the drawer on to the floor, and, to her great delight, heard the sound of something heavy on the ground; picking up her purse, she threw her things back in a heap into her drawer, and ran swiftly down stairs, and out into the garden, hoping to see her mother and sisters in the distance. They were not, however, to be seen, she ran up the steps to the terrace-walk, and looked across the field if they had gone in that direction; seeing nothing of them, she flew to the carriage entrance to look if they had taken that road. But, no, it was impossible they could be gone that way, because, as she could see nearly half a mile down the road, they must have been in sight had they been there. In despair she returned to the house to ask Mrs. Price the way to Seven Oaks; just as she reached the porch she heard her brother Charles's voice calling her. He had most good-naturedly waited for her, and her warm thanks and gratitude to him, made him quite glad he had done so. She told him all her troubles; how she had lost her purse, and had been from one gate to another. "And now," she said, "I am so hot with running, that I really must walk a little slowly, Charlie."

"It is fortunate for you, Jane," her brother answered, "that Mamma met Mr. Robarts, the clergyman, just outside this field, and stood talking to him a little bit, or she would have been quite out of sight by this time: but there they are now in front of us, and Mr. Robarts is walking with them."

Charles opened a gate, as he spoke, and they entered a large and now bare-looking field, with a good foot-path on one side of it. In one corner, close to the gate, were several tent-shaped stacks of poles, eight or ten feet high, and higher, formed by smaller bundles of the poles, standing up on the ground in a diagonal or inclined position, so that their points rested against each other, and were thus mutually supported, leaving a hollow space inside, which Charles declared was just like a wooden tent, or an Indian wigwam, as he ran inside all three, and found quite a little room in each, a space being left between two of the bundles, forming what he called the doorway.

"I wonder what these great tall sticks are for," he said. "Come on, Jane, Mamma is looking back for us."

They both ran on and joined the party. Mrs. Carteret half-smiled, and half-shook her head at Jane, but said nothing about her being late, partly because Mr. Robarts was there, and partly because he was answering Ada's question, as to where the hop garden was.

"I see no garden," she exclaimed, "nothing but a large bare-looking field."

"Did you expect to see flower-beds and gravel-walks?" asked Mr. Robarts, smiling. "This large bare field is called a hop garden, and in a month or two's time you will acknowledge that you never saw any thing prettier than the long avenues of graceful creeping plants, which twine themselves round yonder tall poles (which you can see placed already for their support, at the other end of the field), until, reaching the top, they fall down in festoons, or throw their

tendrils round some neighbouring plant, forming arches over head, and lattice work of the most varied and beautiful character. I know no sight more beautiful," continued Mr. Robarts, warming with his subject, "than a hop garden in its perfection. I have been much abroad, and no vineyard I ever saw came up to it in grace and variety of colour. The vine, as it trails over the houses and trellice work in Italy, is charming certainly, but its leaves lack the brilliancy and freshness of the hop-leaf, and the large golden-looking clusters of hops quite equal those of the grape."

"Next year, Laura, perhaps you will have an opportunity of comparing the two, if your Papa should take you to the Rhine with him," said Mrs. Carteret to her eldest daughter. "I suppose," she continued, addressing Mr. Robarts, "that hops require as much attention as the vine."

"I should imagine almost more," answered Mr. Robarts; "though I am not sufficiently acquainted with the culture of the vine to speak positively; but hops, you must know, are about the most expensive produce of this country. First, the rich manuring and cleaning the ground, the sticking and tying them, then the picking, drying, and packing them, involves such an amount of labour, and, consequently, expense, that it is only farmers with capital that can, or, at least, ought to grow them; and we have a common saying in Kent, that "hops make or break." In good years the returns are very great, but when a blight or failure comes, the loss is equally so. Your landlord is a man of substance, to whom the loss of the thousand pounds that, I daresay, his hops, before ripe, will have cost him, would be no more than very disagreeable, but others could not bear it so well. They are, therefore, anxious and rather speculative things to have to deal with; so I, as a clergyman," he added, smiling, "have nothing to do with them. I let off the gardens on my little property near here, for as it was nearly two

hundred years old, I did not like to grub it up, as the term is."

"You were quite right; I am sure," replied Mrs. Carteret, "I should not like risking such large sums."

They had continued walking whilst Mr. Robarts was speaking, and now came to a part of the field where the plants, being a little forwarder, were already stucked, and beginning to twine round the poles.

"Now, I know!" exclaimed Charles, "what all those long poles are for, stacked together like an Indian wigwam—the only wonder is how they can get so many long poles together."

"Some day," said Mr. Robarts, "I'll drive you to the plantations where the hop poles are grown; and then you will see miles of young larch and fir-trees growing, so close together as hardly to let a small boy like you pass between them. Thus, you see, one branch of industry begets another, and as the world grows older, and civilisation advances, fresh wants spring up, and provide fresh sources of labour, and fresh means of support, for the ever-increasing populations of nations. It was only in Henry the Eighth's reign that people began to fancy they would like beer that tasted a little bitter instead of sweet; so then it was that the hop plant, that had long been known for its soothing and tonic properties, began to be used for this purpose, and its cultivation, to any extent, first commenced."

"I daresay," said Mrs. Carteret, "it was some time before the taste for bitter beer became universal. I can fancy the old people running it down, and the young liking it, because it was the fashion."

"And I," said Jane, who by this time had recovered her equanimity a little, "can fancy that the gentlemen liked it better than the ladies, for I have observed that they do not like sweet wines, or at least care for them, so much as we do."

"A very true observation, young lady. Much as we may like sweet food, we certainly do not like sweet drinks; still it is only within the last century that the application of hops to beer has so much increased. Our Indian colonists are the grand consumers of bitter beer."

"But just before the application of hops to beer, it was very much the custom to 'boil down herbs that were not disagreeable to the taste, or unwholesome, and to brew them with the ale.' The common people, up to this time, still drank the mede, so popular with the Saxons, which was made of honey and ale; and another mixture of the same sort, called bracket, made with good ale, honey, pepper, and a little ginger. The court and nobility, however," continued Mr. Robarts, "were getting more refined in their tastes; foreign wines became fashionable, and Ypocras was a royal beverage, answering to our mulled and spiced wines, as far as ingredients were concerned. One can easily imagine that the palate must have been rather cloyed by such sweet mixtures, and must have found the bitter infusion of the hop a very acceptable change."

"And after all this talk about hops, I daresay my children hardly know which part of the plant is used," said Mrs. Carteret.

Laura said, "it is the fruit, is it not?"

"So the people about here would say, if you asked them," said Mr. Robarts; "but what we call a hop is really the seed catkin, and we know when it is ripe and fit to gather by its colour and scent; and now, I am going to tell you one little thing more about the hop, before I say good bye. You know that sometimes very great people have very poor relations; well, when you see the tall, elegant, aristocratic-looking hop flaunting about from pole to pole, and bending over to the sun and light, as much as to say, 'I am a great beauty and handsomely dressed, I need not be ashamed of showing myself,' you will hardly believe that Monsieur, or rather Madame, is nearly related to, in-

deed, belongs to the same tribe as this humble, abused, and very unpopular plant—”

Here Mr. Roberts stooped and gathered from the roadside, what Ada and Charles at once exclaimed to be—

“ A common stinging nettle ! ”

“ Yes,” continued Mr. Roberts, jokingly; “ and I have no doubt Mr. *Humulus Lupulus*, that is its Latin name, finds his poor relations as disagreeable as we find ours; and it must be confessed that nettles have rather low tastes, for if ever there is a heap of rubbish, or some dark dirty corner of a field, there you will find them flourishing, without the least regard to respectability; now all this must be very mortifying to a gentleman of such old European and American family as the hop, who can’t live without three things himself—light, air, and cleanliness.”

They had now arrived at the end of this long field, and here Mr. Roberts took his leave, after giving them a few directions how to shorten their walk, by passing through a part of Knole Park.

“ I am sorry,” said Jane, “ that Mr. Roberts could not walk farther with us, he seems to know so much about flowers, and I long to know more about them.”

“ Well, my Jane,” said her mother, “ you may teach yourself a good deal about flowers. Botany is one of the few sciences within a woman’s compass, as it does not require any previous training—the Latin names of plants may be learned by those who have never learned Latin. However, you will see Mr. Roberts again to-day, for he is coming to drink tea with us this evening.”

They had now entered the magnificent park of Knole; their walk, a winding path through woods of stately beeches, oaks, elms, and chestnuts, opened out at times, to display some long sweeping glade, enlivened by groups of the fallow deer, which abound in this park. The magnificent trees were in all the freshness and beauty of their early summer dress,

and the mind was impressed with a feeling of repose and quiet, not always accompanying scenes where man's careful hand is so perceptible, but due here to the vast extent of the glades, avenues, and woods of this really stately domain. One felt that here solitude might be enjoyed without gloom, because the feeling of neglect and desertedness did not exist as in scenes where nature reigns undisturbed or unutilized.

They did not turn aside to look at the old manor house, which owes much of its magnificence to its early ecclesiastical possessors; but continuing their walk, passed through the plain, unattractive gate-houses of the main entrance, noting, however, the size and beauty of the ivy upon them; and then ascending the shady road beyond, found themselves soon in the one long street of the quiet clean town of Seven Oaks, immediately opposite the picturesque looking old grey stone church. It is of the perpendicular style of architecture; there is nothing very remarkable about it, but a quaint character is given to its massive square tower by the little watch-turret at the north-east corner.

"I have observed the same thing in many of the churches about," said Mrs. Carteret. "We cannot wait now, my dear children, to go inside, but we will walk up towards the end of the town, and look at the grammar school and almshouses."

They admired, as all who visit the town must do, the plain but handsome stone building called Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, and then turned back again past the church. Descending the one long street until it divides itself into two—one road branching off to Riverhead and London, and the other to the Vine—they chose the latter, and soon found a shop where Jane was able to buy her watering pot, which the woman undertook to send out to the farm by one of the tradespeople.

There was nothing remarkable about the shops or

the town. At the church end there had been several large substantial-looking houses, evidently inhabited by people of condition; but at this end, the modern houses, though neat and comfortable in appearance, were small and unimportant, and the older tenements, though clean enough, were poor looking, without being very picturesque. The soil, light and sandy, was consequently very dusty; but the atmosphere was fresher and cooler than in any place they had yet been in. Altogether, there was an air of comfort and prosperity about the place, without any signs of progress, as the incessant building round most country towns is now called.

"We Kentish people don't move on very fast, Ma'am," said an old farmer to Mrs. Carteret one day; "but then we stand our ground, and our motto is, 'Never conquered, never shall.'"

Again their road divided itself into two, and they were in some little doubt which line to take, but as a person passing told them both led equally to the Vine, they kept on to the left, and very soon arrived at what is, without doubt, one of the prettiest and most beautifully situated cricket grounds in England. The broad part of the angle or fork, formed by the two diverging roads, gave a not very ample, but tolerably fair and well kept space of ground. At the southern end a neat wooden building was erected for the use of the cricketers and their friends, and on the western side some groups of old elms afforded shelter for the spectators of a match, or a pleasant resting-place for pedestrians on ordinary occasions. Cottages, gentlemen's houses, and a villa or two, were scattered round about, and from the ground itself, which was open to the north, with its fine fresh air, a lovely view, over a richly wooded undulating country, could be obtained. At all times a bright pleasant place to saunter to, the Vine this day wore its gayest aspect, for a cricket match was going on between the Oriental and Seven Oaks Clubs.



Sevenoaks.—The Vine.—Page 59.

Near the cricketing house a tent was erected, and a flag streamed from it, whilst a few gaily dressed ladies were watching the game, and carriages of various sorts and sizes were upon the two roads on either side of the ground. The players, themselves, were in all the variety of light and easy costume that cricketers now permit themselves—the brightly stripped flannel dress, with a scarlet or blue cap, or a complete suit of white, or, as on this occasion, a dark blue suit, with a leathern belt and guards, made a good contrast, and a sort of rallying point for the eye.

Charles, who understood the game, was in a high state of excitement, applauding a good hit as loudly as any of the bystanders, and calling on his mother to admire the batting of this one, or bowling of another. Mrs. Carteret and her daughters stood some time by the rails watching the cheerful scene before them, and admiring the situation of the ground. A juvenile game was going on in one corner, unmindful of the grandeur of the centre; indeed, cricket seems the dominant idea of the Kentish mind in this part of the country; for all ranks, and all ages, may be seen sometime or other, bat and ball in hand, from those who drive to the ground in a well-appointed carriage, to the ragged urchin with scarcely a shoe to his foot.

“Charles,” said his mother, “I and Laura are going to sit down yonder on those felled trees, when you and your other sisters are tired of watching the game, you will find us there.”

These two strolled slowly down to the recumbent trees, pausing every now and then to admire the light and shade, produced by the passing clouds, over the wooded domain of Montreal, and the distant range of chalk hills.

“I am sorry,” said Mrs. Carteret, “that we are not nearer the town, for there is something in the air of this spot, and the whole scene, which is very exhilarating.”

“And I,” said Laura, “am sorry I have not brought

my book and pencils with me, for as I sit here I fancy I could sketch in those elm trees overhanging the path."

Not far from them, an elderly man and boy were engaged sawing a rather large tree into pieces of two or three feet in length. There was something in the regular monotonous noise of the saw that was rather soothing, and neither Laura or her mother spoke for some time, but watched the two until the piece upon which they were engaged was completely severed, then the great whiteness of the wood, particularly when a portion of the bark had peeled off, attracted Mrs. Carteret's attention. She rose and asked the man what tree it was they were cutting up.

He replied that it was a "willow, a white willow."

"And may I ask for what purpose this wood is used, since the pieces you are cutting it into appear rather small?"

"It is used, Madam, for children's toys—little rakes and spades, and articles that require a white wood."

"Is it ready for use now?" inquired Laura.

"Oh, dear, no! Miss; it will be a year or more before I do anything with this wood; we are only cutting it up now for the convenience of removing it; it will dry and harden by keeping."

"It is very white, certainly," said Laura; "and just where the bark has been stripped off, quite dazzling, and so glossy and smooth in texture."

Mrs. Carteret and her daughter remained some little time talking to the old man, who seemed unusually intelligent. He told Laura how they were able to estimate the age of a tree, by counting the rings which displayed themselves on cutting through the trunk; he pointed out a tree near, where these rings were very perceptible, and might be easily counted, and as each fresh layer of wood was the growth of a year, the number of rings would give the number of years the tree had existed.

Whilst standing and talking thus, Charles and his sisters arrived. The Orientals were out, and the Seven Oaks in, and both sides had adjourned to dinner. Charles declared that there had been most splendid play, with the air of one who was competent to judge.

"We, too, must be returning to our dinner," said Mrs. Carteret; but she waited first to explain to Ada and Jane the uses to which the willow tree they saw being cut up was applied.

"Pray," asked Charles, "is it of this wood also, that cricket bats are made?"

"Yes, Master," replied the old man, "it is."

"And," inquired Mrs. Carteret, "are they made entirely by hand?"

"Not quite, Madam; the broad part, or blade of the bat, is first shaped out, and then the handle is turned, the blade is then finished off neatly; and, lastly, the string is put on."

"I wonder how that is done," said Charles; "so neatly and closely."

"Why, Sir, the bat is fixed in a little machine, called a mandrill, and as it turns round, the string is guided on by a boy. It has been the fashion lately to let in a little bit of dark wood down the blade, but I don't know that it gives more strength; however, there are plenty of bats made and bought in this county."

"And where?" asked Charles, eagerly.

"Some distance from here, Sir—near Penshurst."

"Oh, Mamma, if we go to see Penshurst, as you thought of doing, will you let me buy a bat there? I want to take the best I can get back to school."

"Well, we shall see about it when we go; but now, good morning," she said to the man; "I hope we have not hindered your work much."

"Oh, dear no, Ma'am!" he replied, as he took his hat off.

"I suppose, Mamma," said Jane, as they walked home, "that cricket is a very old game."

"I really know very little about it, my dear," replied her mother; "I have met with mention, in old books, of golf, tennis, and quoits, but I do not just now remember much about cricket. Charles, cannot you tell us?"

"Oh, I daresay it is prodigiously old," said Charles; "for everybody says it is a thoroughly English game. I am sure the Germans and French don't play it. A French boy is a regular spoony—that he is."

"And yet," said his mother, "they make brave men and good soldiers."

Charles coloured, and said: "I daresay they do; but we can beat them for all that, but never mind the French. I can tell you one thing, if you like, and that is, how they make cricket balls."

"Do so, my dear, and when I get home I will see if I cannot find out something about cricket in a book of English sports and games."

Mr. Robarts came to tea, as he had promised, that evening; but he could not answer the children's questions, as to why the cricket ground was called the Vine.

"I will tell you," said he, "however, a short story instead."

"Several hundred years ago, in Edward the Third's reign,—how many hundred years is that? Master Charles!"

"Five hundred," answered Charles promptly, for he knew that, from his favourite Edward, the Black Prince, being the son of Edward the Third.

"Well, then, five hundred years ago, a worthy gentleman, called Sir William Rumpsted, was one day walking in a wood near the town of Seven Oaks, when he heard a wailing cry, which he fancied was made by some animal, a wild cat for instance, and therefore gave little heed to it; but as he proceeded, the cry became stronger, and seemed to him more like that of a young child than an animal. He stopped

and listened, the cry seemed close at hand, and yet he could see nothing. Determined now to satisfy himself as to the cause of this sound, he continued motionless until he heard the cry again, and then following the direction of the sound, he reached an aged oak tree, and found, in the hollow of the large trunk, a little weeping baby boy, only a month old, left there by his heartless parents to perish, unless, indeed, some passer by chanced to see him. Moved with compassion, the kind hearted Sir William took the babe up, soothed its cries, and hurried back to the town for food and assistance. He found plenty there ready to help in this work of mercy, and the poor little unconscious foundling had food, clothes, and lodging from that time, until he grew a strong vigorous boy, provided for him by Sir William and other kind charitable people of the town.

It seemed as if the boy would prove a worthy subject for all this kindness, as he showed early a grateful disposition, as well as an intelligent nature, and a desire to do that which was right. As soon as he was old enough, the good people of the town subscribed together for their boy, as they called him, and he was apprenticed to Hugh de Bois, a farrier in London. In reality, however, this man followed the trade of a grocer, and in this capacity the young foundling served him well and faithfully, until the terms of his apprenticeship expired, when he obtained the freedom of the Worshipful Company of Grocers, and liberty to set up for himself, which, after a few years he did. Conscious that all depended upon himself, and his own exertions, he was more than usually diligent and attentive to his business, as well as strict and upright in all his undertakings. Honest industry is rarely unsuccessful, and with young William (he had been named after his patron) it met with its reward. He prospered, grew rich; as he grew rich, he became influential; and, at last, the poor friendless foundling was returned to Parliament; more

than that, he was elected Lord Mayor of London, and knighted by King Henry V. Sir William Sevenoaks chose for his arms seven acorns, in allusion to the seven Oaks, which gave the name to the town and himself.

"How pleased," said Jane, "the people of the town must have been with his success."

"Yes, they were; but as he lived to a good old age, most of those who had befriended him in his youth were gone before the record of his gratitude arose. Calling to mind the 'goodness of Almighty God, the favour of his patron, and the inhabitants of Seven Oaks', extended towards him, he determined to leave behind him a lasting memorial of his thankfulness; and, therefore, bequeathed a large portion of his property 'in trust for ever, to found and maintain a Grammar School and Almshouses, for poor and aged persons.'"

"Then it was this poor boy," exclaimed Laura, "who built the charming Grammar School and Almshouses we saw to-day?"

"He founded them, and left the money to keep them up; but the buildings now standing, were erected in George the First's reign, in place of the old ones, that had gone to decay. Much the same plan was maintained; and I will take you one day to visit some of the old people there, and you will see how comfortably they are lodged. They have each two good rooms. Husband and wife are not separated. And behind each block of buildings are little plots of garden ground, a long row of outhouses, comprising woodhouses, laundries, bakehouses, places for cleaning, pumps, &c.; but the best arrangement, I think, you will say, is that the centre apartment of each of the two blocks is inhabited by a woman, called the nurse, whose business it is to attend to these people when ill, or too infirm to help themselves; she goes into their rooms, lights their fires, fetches water, makes their beds, does, in short, whatever is required."

"How very nice," said Mrs. Carteret. "We must really pay a visit to the Seven Oaks Almshouses; for, with the story of their founder, and their comfortable provision for the poor, they are very interesting."

"It is always interesting," said Mr. Robarts, "to trace the successful career in life of those who began under disadvantages; and gratifying when we see the successful do not forget early benefits. Yes! this town is much indebted to its name-child—the Foundling—Sir William Sevenoaks."





CHAPTER IV.

OLD ENGLISH SPORTS AND GAMES.

How did our ancestors amuse themselves? Were the manly games and sports popular with us, known to them? Do our boys employ their play hours much as a Saxon, Danish, or Norman child would have done? or are our recreations as different as our habits of life and dress, or only modifications of theirs? It is not very difficult to answer these questions; for boys and girls, in the main, do not differ very much in any age; and many a childish game played in the schoolroom and nursery of the nineteenth century has been played under a different name hundreds of years ago, in Saxon and Norman nurseries; but when we come to the pastimes of the young men of the present day, we shall find that, although active out-of-door exercises are still as popular as ever, there has been a considerable change in the nature of them. We English people are made up of three races—the Saxon, Danish, and Norman,—for there is very little of the ancient Briton's blood in us, still less of the Roman. Many people suppose that, in our national character, as in our language, the Saxon element predominates; with regard, however, to our sports and amusement, our tastes are certainly more Norman.

The Saxon noble was devoted to hawking, a sport now extinct in England. The Saxon peasant was a wrestler; so was the Dane; but wrestling, hurling

lances, throwing stones and heavy weights, and running, though still to be met with, are not now the favourite recreations of the country youth's holiday. The indoor amusements of the gentler classes, however, still prevail. The dice-box is happily not seen in every gentleman's house, as in the Saxon noble's, but the chess board is, and draughts, and backgammon ("a game," says Strutt, "invented in Wales during the Danish era, and deriving its name from two words—*back* meaning *little*, and *cammon*, battle"), are as popular as ever.

But it was the Norman who transmitted to us our love of hunting,—of this noble sport they were passionately fond. William the Conqueror turned, as we all know, whole districts into hunting grounds; and the nobles began, ere long, to imitate him, making parks and chases in the immediate neighbourhood of their country residences; they hunted the deer on horseback and on foot; their weapons were bows and arrows. The red deer, or common stag, and roe deer abounded in these chases, and in the larger districts of wild uncleared forest land, such as the Wealds of Kent and Sussex, the wild boar was plentiful. Hunting is still, as then, the favourite pursuit of our wealthier countrymen, but the fox is now the noblest quarry, and the animal that affords an Englishman a bold ride across country, a pleasure as keenly enjoyed now, as in the days of our Norman ancestors. Whilst a boar hunt has long been banished from Great Britain, the badger and otter are still hunted in some parts of England and Scotland; and deer stalking in Scotland is a sport that requires not only courage and enterprise, but caution and patience, as well as nerve and coolness.

Hunting and hawking, however, were noble and royal amusements, the world at large could not enjoy them; but we are told, in the early Norman age: "Among the commoner people, the running at the quintin, was the game the most esteemed." Fixed

upon a tall pole, and broader at one end than the other, was a piece of wood, that swayed round when touched; from the narrow end hung a bag of sand; the players, mounted on horseback, aimed with a lance at the broad end of the wood; those who missed it were well laughed at, and those who did not, found it necessary to ride swiftly on from it, or the bag of sand swayed round and hit them hard on the back. "The prize," says Strutt, "for the successful player, was a peacock."

Tournaments and tiltings for the nobles; wrestling, throwing the javelin, archery, and slinging stones, were holiday sports for the people. Boar fights, bull-baiting, and cock-fighting, were equally popular with all classes.

In the early period of English history, all outdoor amusements were more or less of a military stamp—feats of strength and horsemanship—well calculated to make the English youth active, enduring, and brave; holidays were frequent, and on such occasions the people were encouraged in these sports and exercises.

An old author, who lived during the reigns of Henry II. and Richard the First, tells us:

"That every Sunday in Lent was spent in riding courses (races) upon trained horses, and in counterfeit battles, made with lances and shields, those of the younger sort not having their pikes headed with iron; and to these sports not only the citizens of London, but even young men of note and family, who had not yet attained to the honour of knighthood, resorted to try their skill and exercise themselves in arms, whilst others strove in races to outstrip each other, often throwing down their fellows in their courses." In the Easter holidays, "they have feint sea fights, or else a pole was set up in the middle of the Thames, and a shield made fast thereto; then a young man standing up in a boat, which, being rowed by oars and driven by the tide, glides swiftly on, while he with his lance hits the target as the boat passes by; when if he

breaks his lance without loosing his own footing, he performeth well; but if on the contrary, the lance remains unbroken, he will be tumbled backwards into the water, and the boat passeth on."

This game, the water quintin, might have been a dangerous sport, but it appears two boats were always at hand, to pick up any unlucky wight in the water, and cold and dripping he had to endure the laughter and jokes of all the bystanders. For little boys and girls battledore and shuttlecock, and bat trap and ball, nine pins, and such like games, were as common as they are now.

After the Wars of the Roses, when England assumed a more settled and peaceable condition, the military amusements, if we may so call them, somewhat declined; the cross-bow, which required much less strength and dexterity, began almost entirely to supersede that once formidable weapon, the long-bow, and archery altogether was on the decline; the bowling-greens began to be much more frequented than the archery grounds, a less wholesome recreation in every way. Bowls seem to have led to broils, gambling and drinking, and were at last prohibited to the lower orders, except at stated times, such as the Christmas holidays, and then only allowed under certain regulations. Tilting, tournaments, riding at the ring, and jousts, were as much in favour with the rich as before, but the 'prentice boys and country lads of Henry the Eighth's days knew very little about throwing lances, riding at the quintin, &c.; they were still archers, it is true, but their games were more pacific, even when as boisterous; hurling, a game at ball, played with crooked sticks, and exactly the same as the present Scotch game of shinty; and baloon, another game, played with a large leather ball inflated with air, and beaten about with a 'bracer' of wood in the open fields, were the attractions of the age. At the village fairs and at May time, there was dancing, for England, rejoicing in comparative peace, began to be

“merrie”! Easter was a great play time for all classes. Our children’s game of French and English, was a favourite sport, under another name—Pulling for Prime, or pre-eminence: Two villages would form into parties, and pull against each other for the mastery. Wrestling, fencing, and quarterstaff, however, were not yet forgotten; and quoits, or coytes, as it was written, and nine pins or skittles, were, at the village fairs then, what Aunt Sally is now. The very ancient game of quoits, requiring practice and strength of arm, may still be seen in Kent, Surrey, and many other parts of England.

The game is played with large flat metal rings, by two parties, whose aim it is to throw the quoit upon an iron pin, which is fixed in the ground, at a certain distance. The nearest to the mark is, of course, the winner. Any number agreed upon, being the game. If the second best throw is made by the rival party, it nullifies all number one’s after throws, even if they come nearer the mark. If, on the contrary, the second best throw has not been made by the adversary, all number one’s after throws, if as near, or nearer, than the second, count one for each. Quoits, however, was essentially a rustic’s game. Bowls, prohibited to him, were so much in vogue in Elizabeth’s reign, with the gentle in birth, that no home was deemed complete without its bowling-green; and the long gallery, so universal in houses of that age, was frequently planned so that the ladies of the family might overlook the pastime. Tennis, a game of foreign origin, the *Jeu de Paumes*, as it is called in French, was fashionable in Henry the Eighth’s day. To Wolsey’s palace, of Hampton Court, a splendid tennis, or racket court was added. Boys have a game somewhat a kin to it, in their Fives. Henry the Eighth soon got too unwieldy for tennis, which requires agility as well as vigour and a correct eye; but James the First’s son, Prince Henry, in after years, made constant use of the tennis court; he was passion-

ately fond of this game, in which he excelled, and used to continue playing sometimes for three hours together, in his shirt, rather scandalizing the precise gentlemen of his household who, said in this matter, "he seemed somewhat to forget his dignity, and comport himself more like a plebeian than a prince." Few young men, in any age, have more happily combined a thorough mental and physical training than this Prince. Early initiated into every exercise considered then necessary to make an accomplished gentleman, such as riding, fencing, and dancing; his own tastes and active temperament led him, as he advanced in years, to enter keenly into all the sports of the age; there was hardly one in which he did not excel. "When you come again," he writes to his young friend, Sir John Harrington, "you will find me your better at Tennis and Push of Pike." There are portraits of him hunting, shooting, with both long and cross-bows, and throwing a lance. At Nonsuch he had his bowling-green; at Richmond or Shene, he had his swimming-bath in the Thames, near the palace. Hawking had died out by this time, but he had his hunters and dogs; in a tilting match or encounter at arms, he showed himself thoroughly expert; and at golf (golf) on the ice, nearly as good as James the Second, in after days, who, as Duke of York, had but one rival, an Edinburgh baker, named Paterson. Bear hunting and even bull-baiting were now becoming less common. Since the Reformation, holidays were less frequent, and more serious views were entertained upon the observance of the Sabbath; the clergy discouraged the games and exercises the people had been wont to indulge in on that day, but James the First, who, from his early boyhood had conceived a strong dislike to the Presbyterian views of religion, observed this change of feeling in his people with much disgust, and attributed it to the spread of Calvinistic doctrine in England, daily gaining ground under the denomination of Puritanism, and to the influence of a certain section of the

Roman catholic party, who, for reasons of their own, held similar views upon the Sabbath. He issued proclamations, desiring that the people should not be prevented from meeting for harmless recreation, as they had previously been accustomed to do. With a good deal of shrewdness, he predicts that the prohibition of such healthy, active sports, to a class without resources in themselves, will only lead them to spend their idle time in drinking at the alehouse, and talking loosely, to the detriment of body and mind; but he forgot the old proverb, that "though one man may lead a horse to the water, two cannot make him drink." It was easy for him to say that after "the afternoon service, he will not have the people hindered from their lawful recreations; such as dancing, either men or women, from archery, for the men, leaping and vaulting; and will not have them hindered of May games, Whitsun ales, Morris dances; and that the women shall have leave to carry rushes to the Church, for the decorating of it, according to their old customs." It was easy for the King to proclaim all this, but not so easy to reanimate the declining taste of once "merrie England" for lighthearted games, and dances, and rounds on the village greens. He prohibited "bear and bull-baiting on the Sunday; and at all times in the meaner sort of people, as by law prohibited bowling;" but, after all said and done, prayer meetings, and psalm singing, and open air preachings, were more to the taste of the times; and when, after James' death, the troubles of the Great Rebellion began, amusement of any kind was so little followed by any class, that Charles the First asked, with surprise, the name of a gentleman he saw hunting near Edge Hill, the day before the battle, saying: "Who was it could hunt so merrily when his King's crown and dignity were at stake." The gentleman, Sir Richard Shuckburgh, of Shuckburgh, hunted no more. He followed his Sovereign's fortunes until the fatal day, when a cruel death closed the unhappy Charles' trials.

Marbles were at one time in immense favour with the

students at the universities ; this very ancient game is now only played by our little boys, and is hardly so popular with them as a few years ago ; but at the beginning of the last century the game most in vogue was foot ball, which was played in the public streets of London, to the great inconvenience and annoyance of the passers by. What shouts, and laughter, and shrieks of pain, from kicks on the shins, echoed in those days, along the Strand, as the ball came flying down ; and how the number of players swelled, picking up recruits as they flew on, who, following for the length of the street or so, came back sometimes limping, sometimes breathless and laughing. How people would cry out, and police stare, at such a scene in our crowded thoroughfares now,—a charge of omnibuses would soon scatter the phalanx, and the ball would be lost in the host of carriages that roll unceasingly along. Our public school boys, however, still keep up, and delight in this time-honoured English game. But the game of the nineteenth century, the most thoroughly English, perhaps, of every game yet mentioned, in as much, as though played by Englishmen all over the world, even in India, it is played by no other nation but the English—is Cricket ; it is of English growth and manufacture, of no very old date in its present form, having probably undergone many modifications between 1681, when first mentioned by Phillips, the nephew of Milton, and 1791, when noticed by D'Ursey, as an established game. It was first played with a club and a small stick (Cat). Some people suppose it near akin to shinty or golf, whilst others trace it to an old pastime called Dog and Cat.* In an old wardrobe account of Edward I., there is an item charged against Prince Edward, for Creag, which, in the absence of any other explanation, has been supposed to mean cricket. Be this as it may, it was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century that it became thoroughly

* Blaine's Encyclopedia of Rural Sports.

popular, for Shakespeare (our great recorder of English sports and customs) does not mention it, neither do the poets of his age, nor King James I., in his "Book of Sports." The first Cricket Club was established at Hambledon Downs in 1750; but Kent had made it her own special game, even before this; and D'Urfey, who was a frequent visitor at Knole, probably saw it played on the very ground where many a Kentish Club now delights to play it. Popular with all ages, and within the compass of all fortunes, it is a healthy vigorous sport, that leads to no gambling, drinking, or brawling. A cricket match seems to engender no ill will between the contending parties, but on the contrary, is productive of a generous emulation. It is a game that brings different classes together, for we see the peer and the peasant playing side by side; in short, it has so many recommendations, that it deserves the place it now holds, as first of our national out-door games, and long may it remain so.

We have seen that, except in name, our in-door amusements, whether for old or young, have undergone little change; our games of chance being identically the same; but the out-door amusements that in early Norman days, and later, had more or less a martial character, we have discarded or exchanged. The water quentin has given way to boating and boat races. Our young men are sometimes boxers, but seldom wrestlers; and tilts and tournaments give place to rifle matches and sham fights. Hunting and shooting have, after all, only changed their style; the bullet flies where once the arrow sped. And the long-bow has become the noble's plaything instead of the yeoman's weapon. Bear-baiting, bull-baiting, and cock-fighting, are things of the past, as far as the Englishman is concerned, but the two first exist still, in name, in the play-ground. The following rhymes of boys' and girls' games, in olden days, may amuse some boys

and girls now, and exercise their ingenuity in finding out a few of their favourites, under these old, yet to them, new names.

"Ancient customs in Games, used by Boys and Girls, merrily set out in verse."

"BY RANDALL HOLMES.

"Any they dare challenge to throw the sledge,
To jump, to leap over ditch or hedge,
To wrestle, to play at stool ball, or to run,
To pitch the bar, or to shoot of a gun,
To play at loggets, nine holes, or ten pins,
To try it out at foot-ball, by the shins;
At tick, tack, seize noddy, man and ruff,
At hot cockles, leap frog, or blindman's buff,
To drink the halper pots, or deal at the whole can,
To play at chess, or pue, and ink horn,
To dance the morris, or play at barley brake;
At all exploits a man can think or speak.
At shove groat, venter point, or cross and pile,
At beshrew him that's last at any stile;
At leaping over a Christmas bonfire,
Or, at the drawing Dame out of the mire,
At shoot cock, gregory, stool, ball, and what not,
Pick point, top, and scourge to make him hot."





CHAPTER V.

A PLEASANT PLAN—DRIVE TO THE CHALK HILLS—THE PICNIC—MAMMA'S STORY—SEARCH FOR ORCHISES—MAN ORCHISES, ETC.—A FIERCE DOG—THE HOSPITABLE FARMER—BECKET'S WELL—SKETCHING THE TOWER—A BRICK FIELD.

ONE morning after breakfast, Mrs. Carteret said to her little party, "What do you say, my dear children, to a drive to the chalk hills to-day, in search of these wonderful orchises Jane is always talking about?"

"Oh, delightful!" they all exclaimed.

"And what do you say then to a long day there, as it is so fine, taking our dinner with us, and dining out of doors? But perhaps," she added, looking at Ada and Charles, who were both a little, a very little greedy, "perhaps you would not like a cold dinner? perhaps you would rather come back for that?"

"Oh, mamma!" they cried, "how can you say so, when you know a picnic is one of the most, the *very* most delightful things in the world? And with plenty of cold chickens," added Charles, jokingly, "I think I can manage for once in a way."

"Oh! I don't promise you anything but cold beef or mutton," said Mrs. Carteret; "but I'll promise you a first-rate sauce—a sauce that makes everything edelicious."

"What is that, mamma?" asked Ada wonderingly.

"A good appetite, my dear child. After a long

drive, or a run upon the hills, you will be like the Alpine traveller, who never tasted anything so good as the cold mutton and bread he carried in his pocket. I remember once, myself, when climbing some of the Styrian mountains as a girl, eating some black bread that was hard as this table, with the greatest possible relish. So, with this experience, I think we may dispense with all the delicacies of the season at our picnic dinner."

"But, Mamma, please, take something more than stale bread," said Laura, laughing.

"I shall bribe Mrs. Price to put in something good," said Charles.

"All must be ready at eleven. Jane, remember that, and take this tin box for the orchis; and you, Laura, your sketch book and pencils; and Ada, you—don't leave your head behind you." For Ada and Charles, in all the happiness and excitement of children, were executing a fantastic dance together.

"Ada!" cried Charles, "who will be at the swing first?"

Off they started, whilst Jane departed to the conservatory, and Laura to help her, in case she should not be in time.

Both, however, were dressed full ten minutes before the appointed hour, with everything by them they wished to take, when Mr. Robarts came in (he was always an early visitor), accompanied by a young lady, his niece, whom he wished to introduce to the Miss Carterets. When he heard where they were going, he said he was very sorry that his arrangements for the day were such that he and his niece could not join the party; but on Mrs. Carteret's pressing it very much, he accepted her invitation for his niece, who was very glad to go, but would not forego his own engagements; he said he would not detain them now, but only wait until the carriage came round. They were standing on the lawn in front of the house, and were all assembled except Ada.

"Charles," said his mother, "run, and tell your sister to come; the carriage will be here immediately."

Meantime, Mr. Robarts was telling Jane about the three different kinds of orchises she would find on the hills. He then showed her the different parts of the flower, the petals, calyx, stamens, pistil, &c.

"There is much, you see, to learn and remember before you can begin to class plants; but that is now much simplified, and under the natural system the classification of plants ceases to be a string of hard unmeaning names, and becomes something which conveys its sense at once to the mind, and so fixes itself unconsciously upon the memory."

"When I was a boy," continued Mr. Robarts, "the number of these little things called stamens, according to the Linnean system, decided the class; an imperfect arrangement, as you will yourself perceive when you know more about it. It was not very difficult, certainly, to remember such words as Monandria, Diandria, &c., but they gave you no idea of the plants they comprised; and classed together flowers as dissimilar, as the ranunculus and the rose; consequently, everybody who loved botany was delighted when the natural order or system, as it is called, appeared, it was so easy to remember that roses belonged to the order Rosacea, and ranunculus, to Ranunculacea, heart's-ease, and violets to Violacea, and cruciform flowers, such as these (picking a piece of wallflower near him) to Cruciferae."

"Oh! that does sound very easy to remember," said Jane.

"So far it is, my dear young lady, but a great deal more follows: the divisions into families and species is not so easily retained; but if you really wish to learn, and learn thoroughly, I will do what I can to help you to lay a groundwork during the few months you remain here, and then at some future time you may resume the study with profit, I hope, and find

an ever-varying source of interest and delight in the study of these beautiful works of God's creation. The commonest road-side weed, trodden under foot, will give you proofs of the system or order with which everything has been created."

"Look," continued the kind-hearted old clergyman, his face lighting up with pleasure as he plucked a flower of the common white clover growing in the grass at his feet, "Look at this humble flower; its flowerets are ranged in circles round a centre, forming a sort of cone, or pyramidal whole, the lower circle of flowerets develop themselves first—when they have bloomed they fade, and as they fade they fold themselves back upon the stalk, so as to give space to the next tier of flowerets above, and so on until the whole mass has bloomed. Is not that an illustration of what I have told you? And again, you see there an insect resting upon a flower, a chance thing, you imagine—a visitor that may come and go as he lists, without good or evil result. Not so! dear children—the Great Master's hand led that little insect there, guided his instincts towards that very plant; for without the light pressure of his airy touch upon the inside of that blossom, the pollen or yellow dust at the top of the stamens would not be shed upon the pistil, a process, which is necessary in order that the fruit or seeds may be perfected. Thus, in the trifling incident that a superficial observer would term accident, the student sees a link in the great chain of design, and the study of this vast design, this grand scheme of nature, in only one of its branches, and in its most insignificant details, leads the mind up from the contemplation 'of nature's work to nature's God.'"

The children had listened with rapt attention; for Mr. Roberts had a manner and a voice that riveted his hearers, and fixed his instruction in the mind—and he on his part delighted in an audience of the young; he loved to note their fresh interest and unquestioning confidence in his teaching.

"All that you have said," replied Jane, modestly, "makes me still more anxious to know something of botany. I should be so very much obliged to you if you would help me."

"That I will; but now I am sure I am detaining you—so good bye, and a pleasant day to you. Lucy, I will send for you in the evening."

But all this time Ada had not been found. Charles had sought her, and called her in vain. One of the maids came out and said she had seen her go into the garden with her bonnet on, some time ago.

"Ada! Ada!" they called. "We are going. Come Ada! Ada!" but no Ada appeared. Mrs. Carteret began to get uneasy.

"Perhaps she is gone to the carriage already," said one, running off to look.

"Perhaps she is gone into the meadow or copse," said another, setting off in that direction.

"Perhaps into the orchard," said a third.

And so all dispersed, and left Mrs. Carteret standing alone, a little perplexed and somewhat uneasy, as Ada, in spite of Mrs. Price's encomiums, was not unfrequently in mischief. But, lifting up her eyes a moment after, what was her astonishment, to see the child's little figure on the lawn, where a minute or two before there had been no one.

"Why, Ada, where do you come from? where have you been? and how did you appear so suddenly?"

"I have only been in the garden," said Ada, colouring. She had a book in her hand.

"Only in the garden—what do you mean? If so, you must have heard us calling you; why did you not come? This is not a time for hiding and play. You have been keeping the whole party waiting."

"I was not hiding, at least purposely; and I could not come before."

"Why not? Did you hear us calling to you?"

"Yes, I did!"

"What were you doing then, that you could not come?"

"I was reading."

"But that did not prevent you?"

"No, Mamma."

"Then what did? Where were you? Speak, Ada; I insist upon knowing."

"Oh, Mamma, it was nothing wrong; only I did not like to come down before strangers. I was up in a tree."

"Up in a tree? What tree, pray?"

"That tree there, near the swing. It is not a difficult tree to climb, indeed, and quite safe; and I like to sit in it and read—and I thought I should see you from it when you were ready, and come down directly; only I did not like to do so before Mr. Robarts and that lady."

"I suppose you thought they would call you a little tomboy. Well, there is no great harm in it certainly, only I think you had better in future leave tree climbing to your brothers. I am not anxious my little girls should add that art to their accomplishments."

"So your truant is found," said Mr. Robarts, as he handed Mrs. Carteret into the large roomy open carriage, which held the whole party very well—Charles preferring to sit beside the coachman.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Carteret, "she had transformed herself into a squirrel, but was too shy to come down from the tree, whilst spectators were near."

"Oh! that was the case, was it!" said Mr. Robarts laughing.

So for a long time after Ada was known by the name of the Squirrel.

A beautiful drive of nearly two hours brought them to the spot where they intended to alight. The coachman put up the carriage and horses at a little road-side inn near, and the party started off to seek out some shady spot where they could lay their

cloth for dinner—after which event they were to disperse and look for the orchises. Miss Lane, a nice merry girl of seventeen, enjoyed the whole affair quite as much as the younger Carterets, who were all full of merriment and fun, and ran about as if there was no such thing as a hot June sun at mid-day blazing over head. It was not so easy a matter to find a shady place, because the trees on the chalk hills were smaller and barer than those they had left behind. But at last a spot was selected that seemed to suit all parties, and Charles was despatched to fetch the coachman with the basket of provisions.

The spot chosen was on the brow of the hill, where two or three trees clustering together afforded a very fair shade, and from whence a pleasant view of the wooded valley below could be enjoyed. The only drawback was that—from the sloping nature of the ground, and the slipperiness of the short dry grass—there was some danger every now and then of rolling down the hill. The most convenient place was of course allotted to Mrs. Carteret; after her, to Lucy Lane, as a visitor, whilst the others seated themselves as best they could.

“What a long time Charles is!” cried Ada; “I am so dreadfully hungry!”

“How good you will find the cold mutton,” said Mrs. Carteret.

“Oh, Mamma, I am sure there is something else; but I don’t mind, I can eat anything and drink oceans.”

“Ada, Ada!” said her mother reprovingly.

“Here comes Charles!” cried Ada, starting up, intending to run and meet him—but forgetting the peculiarities of the ground, she missed her footing, and fairly rolled down the hill, to the great amusement of her sisters—who, knowing she could not be hurt, laughed heartily.

“Halloo, Ada!” cried Charles; “is that a new way of coming to dinner? Here, some of you, and

take this great stone bottle from me. I have carried it far enough."

"Pray what is it?" said Mrs. Carteret; "not ale, I hope; we should never drink all that."

"No, Mamma, it is water."

"A very necessary addition to our dinner. Did you think of that Charles?"

"No; the people at the inn did."

"Then I am very much obliged to them, for I had forgotten all about it, and I think we should have come badly off without it; but now to business. You, Charles, shall unpack the basket. Jane, you shall lay the cloth. Laura shall prepare and dress the salad. And Ada, you shall carry the things from Charles to Jane; but pray don't roll down the hill with the veal-pie. Miss Lane and I will look on and give general directions."

Miss Lane suggested that, as she ought not to be idle, she might cut up the bread, this being the first thing after the lettuces that was produced from the capacious hamper.

With this division of labour the arrangements proceeded rapidly. Jane's office was the most difficult; laying a cloth upon an inclined plane would probably puzzle the Queen's butler himself; and it required all Jane's patience and perseverance, and a good deal of ingenuity, to prevent the plates, tumblers, &c., from rolling down the hill. It was probably for this reason that Jane was selected by her mother for this task, who knew her determination always to carry out what she undertook.

But now as the hamper was unpacked, each article was received with immense applause. First, came a large veal-pie, to which the place of honour was awarded. Next, a plump roast fowl! (especial note of approbation from Charles). Thirdly, a small ham. Fourthly, a cold shoulder of lamb. Then gooseberry tarts and cheese-cakes. Lastly, a handsome looking cake, some gingerbread, two bottles of wine,

gingerbeer, corkscrew, plates, glasses, salt, mustard—nothing was forgotten by the thoughtful Mrs. Price.

"We shall not starve," said Laura; "but there is one thing you have forgotten, Mamma—the cold mutton."

"Be content without it; and don't forget to leave some dinner for the coachman."

This caution was not unnecessary, for the fowl soon disappeared, the veal-pie shared the same fate, and the shoulder of lamb began to look foolish—for the difficulties of eating with a plate on the knee, and a slippery seat, seemed rather to increase the appetite. But, at last, as everything must have an end, these hungry young people were satisfied.

"Nothing has been forgotten to-day, as at most out-of-door dinners," observed Miss Lane.

"We owe that, I believe, to Mrs. Price leaving it to no one but herself, as she would say," answered Laura.

"I remember," said Mrs. Carteret, "where she would have been very useful."

"Oh, Mamma, do tell us about it?" cried one and all.

"It happened years ago, when I was a young girl staying with some relations in the western highlands of Scotland. There was a large party visiting in the house, which, like most highland houses, accommodated an immense number of people, without appearing to have a great deal of accommodation in it. There were half a dozen young men, at least—four young ladies, including myself, and a due proportion of older ladies and gentlemen. An excursion was planned to a grand and beautiful Loch or salt-water lake in the neighbourhood, Loch Etive. Two parties were formed; the one was to proceed by a shorter route over the hills, taking a pony with them to carry part of the provisions, cloaks, plaids, &c., and comprised chiefly the young men and ladies who were good walkers;

and the other party, to which I was attached, was to drive by the usual route—a considerable distance round—and, taking a boat at the lower end of the lake, was to row up to the head of the lake, the place of rendezvous. After a delightful drive, and some little delay in getting boatmen enough at the ferry to row our party and heavy boat so far, we started up this magnificent arm of the sea; the rocks and hills becoming steeper and wilder as we neared the extremity of the lake. The day was perfect, cloudless, and still: so that the water was like a sheet of glass, transparent and clear as crystal. The heat, however, was tremendous; and as hats were not then introduced, I often wonder how we supported it, and how we had any complexions left at all, after such a scorching. Not a living creature was to be seen on sea or shore, as we advanced. The profound silence was only broken by the splashing of the oar, or the rude gaelic song, which the boatmen every now and then chanted out. I remember well now the impression the whole scene made upon me. I have seen many grander hills, and perhaps larger lakes, since in Switzerland and Tyrol, but none that gave me a finer idea of nature in her wild and majestic mood.

“To continue, however, we reached and landed at our place of rendezvous, where we hoped to meet the other party, some of whom were to have returned by the boat and carriage, in place of some of our party who were to walk back by the hills, but no sign of them appeared. So after waiting a little, and walking in the direction they ought to have arrived, we decided to unpack our provisions and dine, as the long row, and the homewards drive before us, could not be deferred.

“The first discovery on opening the hamper was, that there was no table cloth; but a plaid was soon substituted for that. Out came all sorts of good things—cold grouse, chickens, meat, &c. ‘Now for the plates,’ cried Lord C——, but no plates appeared.

‘Necessity is the mother of invention;’ so the newspapers, wrappers, and paper, were torn up and substituted for plates.

“‘Some knives and forks now, and we shall do,’ said Lord C—— again; but again, were there no knives! no forks! not a single one. This was more serious. The barren shore upon which we were, did not offer anything that could possibly be substituted for them. Two of the gentlemen of the party, however, produced pocket knives, and with these they managed to cut up the game and poultry. Our time was too short, and the party too large, to hand them about for general use; so we were obliged to make use of our fingers and teeth, in a true barbarian fashion—and a very uncomfortable one, too, I assure you.

“Our next want was a drinking cup. Lord C——, who was a great walker, had fortunately in his pocket a little wooden cup, called a quaich—and this served us well in our need; and a clever person made the shell of a hard boiled egg answer the purpose of a wine glass for himself. Our great want, however, was water. It was impossible to quench one’s thirst with wine alone, or with the whiskey, which was there, of course. The water of the lake was salt, as I have told you; and in that arid, rocky region, every stream, or burn as it is called in Scotland, was dried up. To the last we hoped the other party would appear with the wine, water, and soda water, which our kind host had given particular directions should be taken, and which of course had all been put into the hamper of the other party. They came not; and there was no help for it, but to make the best of it—and to be thankful that the substantials had not been forgotten. We were all very hungry; and it was amusing to observe the efforts of the party to satisfy this feeling without being too animal or savage like in the proceeding. Whether we had been very amply supplied, or whether this mode of eating was too uninviting to indulge much in, whichever way it was, a very large

quantity of things remained unconsumed, which the boatmen very thankfully accepted; they warned us before long to return, and we set off on our homeward course, rather disappointed at the nonsuccess of the affair as far as the meeting was concerned. But I, for one, was not sorry to return again by the lake, and see as much as possible of it. The rocky inaccessible hills of Glencoe, that bound the head of the lake, assumed a softer hue as the day advanced, and a less desolate character was given to the scene by a little incident that we witnessed about midway in the lake. But perhaps you do not care to hear all this, but would rather come to the fate of the other pic-nickers."

"Oh no, Mamma! please tell us what you saw," cried all the children, Miss Lane joining.

"Well then, at a spot where the steep mountains seemed to divide so as to form a little glade or glen, sloping down to the water, we observed a number of people, perhaps twenty or thirty in all, they were clustered together at first, but soon dispersed in twos and threes, some coming to the lake and going off in boats, others taking paths across the hills, north south, east, and west. On questioning our boatman, we found that close by there was a little presbyterian chapel, and that the minister from some place, I forget where, had come to administer the annual sacrament to this small and far scattered congregation. This is a very solemn service in the Scotch church. And as we rested on our oars, and watched this small congregation emerge from communion with their God into scenes that seemed to speak so visibly of his power, we felt as if the rite must have had a more than usual solemnity for those who had made such efforts to receive it; for there was rarely service in this little church, and when there was, the congregation came from distances of ten and fifteen miles. The whole scene was peculiarly suggestive of Religion as a bond of union; it had called together, from lonely moor and mountain hut, the solitary shep-

herd, the boatman, the fisherman, and such like humble men, and laid before them a rich banquet to strengthen them in their several states. We were all suffering so dreadfully from thirst that the boatmen rowed ashore and good-naturedly set off to a farm house near, and got us some milk—never was anything more enjoyed. It was late before we got home, and there we found the rest of the party clamorous for their dinner, which, as the head of the house was with us, they had not of course ventured to begin. We soon learnt why they were so very impatient; it seems that they had taken a wrong route across the hills. About three o'clock, the hour at which we should have met, finding they were as distant as ever from the place of rendezvous, they decided to return home, without attempting to reach Loch Etive, and consequently sat down to dine, and proceeded to unpack the good-sized hamper which the pony had carried. Ada! Charles! I leave you to imagine their sensations—try! and fancy what *your* feelings would have been, if on unpacking yonder basket you had found, as they did, nothing but a collection of plates! knives and forks! and one small packet of gingerbread! The provisions for both parties had been put into our hamper."

"Oh! poor things!" said Ada. "I do pity them. What did they do, Mamma?"

"Packed them up again, and got home as soon as they could. I don't suppose anybody who was there, ever forgot that picnic party."

"But how very stupid of the servants not to have divided the provisions between the two parties," exclaimed Laura.

"You could not complain, at any rate, Mamma, after their fate," said Jane; "for you certainly had the lion's share."

"And the others," said Miss Lane, "a feast of the Barmecides."

"Of what?" asked Ada.

"Of what cannot be explained now," answered her

mother; "for I see the coachman coming, and he will be glad of his dinner—so you had better all of you go now; but try to be back at this place, as nearly as possible, by a quarter to four. I myself shall not go far from it."

Ada and Charles immediately availed themselves of the permission to depart, by rolling down the hill together, and thus got a considerable start of the rest. Laura, Miss Lane, and Jane, walked off more soberly together in search of the orchises. They soon had their hands full of the commoner kinds, the large dark purple species, with its beautiful leaves spotted with black; also a paler variety, and the sweet scented white; but of the rarer kinds they sought for they found no specimen. The search became exciting; even Miss Lane, who had not shown much interest in it at first, became eager about it.

"How provoking!" exclaimed Jane, "would it be to go home without at least one of the three. I wonder if it is too early—the year! or too late! Yet no—Mr. Roberts said that they were generally in bloom about Whitsuntide."

• They descended the hill, then mounted again, then tried the vicinity of a small plantation; but all in vain. They were evidently not in the land of these rare orchises; and after an hour of fruitless wanderings, their hands full of lovely flowers, but not those they wanted, Laura, who possessed a watch, declared it was time for them to retrace their steps to the place where they had left Mrs. Carteret; and she and Miss Lane, who were tired of stooping down and running backwards and forwards, left off looking, and were soon engaged in an interesting conversation about some mutual acquaintance that they found they had; whilst poor Jane, vexed and mortified, examined anew every tuft of grass or plant, in the hope of finding something before they were obliged to leave. They were within a hundred yards of their mother,

who was sitting down and reading, when Laura dropped some of her flowers, and on stooping down to pick them up she exclaimed—

“Oh, Jane! what do I see! What have I found? Come and look at it before I pick it!”

Jane rushed forward and saw the quiet coloured, somewhat dingy and unobtrusive flower of the wonderful looking fly-orchis. It was growing on the open part of the hill, quite clear of other plants; but as there were only a few flowerets on its slender stem, the lower part of which was partly encircled by its leaves, it had escaped observation. The flower was a dingy reddish purple in hue, and on the lower lip was a bright blue spot. Its resemblance to a fly was most curious—a complete deception.

“I never thought,” said Laura, “when I stooped to pick up my flowers, that this was one of the orchises for which we were seeking, for I had quite forgotten all about them; and for the moment I thought this was really only two or three flies that had settled on a plant, when I suddenly recollected the orchises, and fortunately looked again. Pick it now, Jane, and put it into your tin box. I dare say we shall find some more near.”

“I did so wish to be the first to find one, but I don't mind now, for anything is better than going away without any,” said Jane.

Whilst she was carefully, not picking, but taking up the plant, root and all, with a small trowel brought for the purpose, Laura found another specimen not far off; and Miss Lane, with a great exclamation announced that she had found the bee orchis.

Mrs. Carteret rose from her seat, and went to see what caused so much excitement.

“Oh, Mamma!” cried Jane, “after going so far, and finding nothing, how provoking to think that we left you sitting close to all these treasures.”

“It is often the case, my dear,” replied her mother, “in matters of greater importance than this, that we

go to a distance to seek what we might find near at hand. I remember you walked hastily away from this spot, which seems to be the very place where these singular flowers are to be found. But look! Laura is beckoning you—she has discovered something.”

Jane ran eagerly up to her sister; the last of the three curiosities was found. Laura held in her hand the green man-orchis.

“Oh, you delightful curiosity!” cried Jane; “you most absurd flower! Please look, Mamma, at my little yellow men. Look at the two arms and legs. Their heads must be hidden under this sort of green helmet.”

“It is indeed curiously fantastic,” said Mrs. Carteret, “the helmet is made by the leaves of the calyx or flower cup, Mr. Roberts described to you; the yellow part is the flower. You see there is no spur to the lower part of the flower. It is getting very rare even here; and the lizard-orchis, which has been found here, I believe, is still more uncommon—but that flowers much later.”

“The bee-orchis, however, is the prettiest,” said Miss Lane, coming now towards them. “I have found two specimens on the edge of that old chalk pit. Is it not exactly as if the brown and yellow body of a bee was resting on the pretty purple-tinged leaves of the calyx?”

“Exactly!” cried Jane. “I must try and have a plant of that. Show me, please, dear Miss Lane, where you found it.”

But Jane was disappointed; the ground was so hard, and the chalky soil so unyielding, that she could not get the root up. Her mother said:

“I am hardly sorry, Jane; for people about here complain that these curiosities of nature are every year becoming scarcer, owing to enthusiasts like yourself digging up roots and all—and when you have got

the plants, they seldom live in the different soil and atmosphere they are transplanted to; so I really think it is best to be content with the flower only. And after all, I would rather have a plant or two of the early fragrant purple orchis, with its beautiful dark spotted leaves; it has both beauty of colour and smell, which so few of this family have."

"Orchises, I think Mr. Roberts said, belonged to the Linnean class of monandria, one stamen plants, and the natural order Orchidacea," said Jane.

"Quite right, my dear; I am glad you remember it so well. But here come Ada and Charles with their hands full."

They had wonderful adventures to relate—a dangerous ditch crossed—fierce cattle encountered; but they had found a specimen of the *Ophrys Muscifera*—fly-orchis—which was deposited in Jane's tin box.

And now the object of the day being accomplished, Mrs. Carteret said it was time to return, if Laura wished to try and make a sketch of the ruined tower at Otford. They found the carriage ready for them at the foot of the hill, packed their flowers carefully away, and started.

Just as they reached the village of Otford, the coachman discovered that one of the horses had got a shoe loose, and thought it better, as they still had a long drive before them, to take him at once to the farrier's. The party accordingly alighted at the village green. Laura and Miss Lane walked off to the tower. Charles remained to see the shoeing business attended to; and Mrs. Carteret and her other two daughters determined to stroll about, meanwhile, and see what this little place was like. After looking into the churchyard, and at the rude old-fashioned church, and walking through the one small street, if such it can be called, of Otford, admiring the somewhat foreign appearance of a mill, and a stream bordered with poplars, they turned back again and took another road which they found led only to a farm house. A nice, cheerful,

prosperous-looking abode it was, with a goodly array of hay stacks of last year's hay still standing, and room for plenty more of this year's growth, evidently expected. A straight walk up to the house, with a few flower-beds cut neatly out in the grass on each side, and the creeping roses over the house, gave the otherwise unpretending building quite an inviting aspect.

"Mamma," said Ada, "I am so dreadfully thirsty! Don't you think I might ask for a glass of water at this farm house?"

Mrs. Carteret hesitated a little; but seeing a good-natured looking woman at one of the windows, she thought they might venture to do so, and accordingly lifted the latch of the little gate, and with her daughters walked towards the house. They had just reached the door, and Mrs. Carteret was going to knock, when a large powerful looking dog, of the mastiff breed, rushed out upon them, with a yelling bark that filled them with terror. Ada and Jane screamed aloud. Ada ran back; the dog followed, and seemed as if about to spring upon her, when a man's voice, calling loudly to him to lie down, checked his course—and a smart cut from a whip, which the farmer, who now appeared, held in his hand, sent him howling back to the yard, where he was immediately tied up by the order of his master. Mrs. Carteret felt faint with the fright, and it was some few minutes before she could recover herself sufficiently to speak. The woman she had seen at the window had by this time appeared at the door, and begged them to walk in, and sit down a bit—which they gladly did.

"How came Pincher to be loose?" she inquired.

"Well—Thomas had taken him down to the stream, to give him a drink and a washing, and was going to tie him up again; when he heard the latch of the gate go, and he was off like a shot. It was a lucky thing I was near, or he might have given little Miss a pretty fright."

"I think he has done that," said Mrs. Carteret. "Surely he is a very dangerous dog to be loose?"

"He is an ugly tempered dog indeed, Ma'am, especially to strangers, and I am always afraid we shall have some bad accident with him," answered the woman; "but he never is loose, and Thomas must be well scolded for taking him down to the stream without his chain and collar. If it ever happens again, John," she said, turning to her husband, "you must get rid of him—Pincher, I mean."

"Na, na," answered the farmer; "I have had my ricks burnt once—and that is once too often; and I should not sleep sound at night if it was not for Pincher. No one dare come within half a mile of this place at night whilst he is here."

"But at any rate," said Mrs. Carteret, "your wife's precaution is a good one; the dog should not be taken loose from his kennel to the stream."

"He would not interfere with any one away from this place, in the day time. Had you been in the road he would not have noticed you," replied the farmer, who did not seem to like his dog to be blamed.

"Well, I must confess, we were intruders who had no business here; but my little girl was so thirsty, we thought we might venture to ask for a glass of water. May we have one now?"

"With all my heart!" said the woman, kindly. "You shall have some directly; and very good water ours is, which cannot be said of all the water in this neighbourhood."

"Won't the young lady take a little of your home made wine, mistress?" said the farmer. "Water's a poor thing to give a body."

"To be sure," said the woman; "or some cider? or some raspberry vinegar?"

But both Mrs. Carteret and Ada refused all these kind offers, although hospitably urged upon them.

"Well then!" resumed the farmer's wife, "sup-

pose the young lady has a draught of nice fresh milk."

This was gratefully accepted. Whilst the good woman hurried out of the room to order the milk, Mrs. Carteret entered into conversation with their host, and told him where they had been spending their day, and where they were returning to.

"Oh!" said the farmer, "I know Price well enough, and he knows me, and a nice place it is, the Hall Farm; he'll tell you all about me, if you ask him about old Killick, John Killick—they've generally a family with them every year. Have you been round our village, ma'am? seen the old tower? and the well?"

"We have seen the tower," replied Mrs. Carteret, "and my daughter is now sketching it; but not the well. What do you allude to?"

"Why, ma'am, there's not much to see in it; but it is an old well, and we call it Becket's well—for they say he made it."

"What Becket? Thomas à Becket?"

"Yes, madam, he was archbishop of Canterbury, you know; and the castle—ruin that now is—was one of the dozen or so of places the archbishops had in this country. The story is, that there was a great want of water hereabouts, and some of the poor people complaining one day to the archbishop, he struck the ground with his crozier, and out came the stream and ran into the well, which has never been empty since. One part of the story is true enough, ma'am, and that is, that the well is there, and never does run dry. I'll show you where it is when you go, if you like."

"Thank you much," replied Mrs. Carteret. "I dare say Becket had the well dug, and in those superstitious days people were always ready to ascribe supernatural powers to those who conferred benefits upon them. But this place is called Ot-ford. There must always have been a stream here, before Thomas à Becket's time."

"I suppose so, madam. There is the Darent; but I am not very learned in these matters. If you were only to look at the names of the places about, you would suppose we had lots of water in this part of the world—for we are all fords and rivers; Under River, River-head, and River-hill, and so on—and yet we are badly enough off for water, everyone knows. But here comes Missus with the tray."

This was a welcome announcement to the thirsty Ada, whose eyes quite sparkled at the sight of the rich looking milk; but Mrs. Killick, not content with offering her stranger guests this pure beverage, had brought a capital home-made cake, which she insisted upon the young ladies tasting—and begged Mrs. Carteret to try a little of her lemon acid, in the fresh spring water. Mrs. Carteret did so, and found it so good, that she could not help saying, she should much like to know how it was made. Mrs. Killick at once offered her the receipt, and promised to send it over one day to the Hail Farm. The old farmer's eyes twinkled with fun as he said to Mrs. Carteret,

"My wife, ma'am, belonged to a teetotal family; and so she knows of more driuks than anyone I ever met with. These temperance people don't keep to tea, ma'am, by any means; they've got their temperance beer, and their temperance wine."

"And very good things beside," interrupted Mrs. Killick, good temperedly; "but the young ladies must have some more cake."

And she cut them such large pieces that Jane, who had not the same capacity for cake as Ada, was obliged to break a bit of hers off privately and put it in her pocket.

At length Mrs. Carteret rose to go, and Mr. Killick offered to show them the well; so, thanking his wife heartily for her hospitality, they set off on their road—he pointed out a foot track across the hills called the Pilgrim's Road, which led to Becket's tomb at Canterbury.

They had not very far to go; but without their friend the farmer, would hardly have found the place. He brought them into a large corn field, from the lower end of which, a long strip of plantation, or rather tangled thicket, stretched upwards into the field, and at the extreme end of this was Becket's Well. It had nothing *well*-like in its form or appearance; but was evidently a spring which had been deepened so as to form a small reservoir, or tank; being of an oblong shape, its sides protected by solid stone masonry, with steps built in one corner for the convenience of those who came to fetch water. A little stream or brook ran from it, not into it, whatever it might have done in Thomas à Becket's time, but was now so overgrown with weeds and briars as hardly to be traced, except by the ear, which could easily detect its course by the little splash and murmur with which it ran forth in a somewhat straight line from the well to the pond of a neighbouring house, which it helped to feed. The well itself was half choked up by weeds, and its walls were nearly covered by over-hanging masses of ivy; but at the upper end the water still looked deep and dark, and the little party surveyed it with much interest as connected by tradition with a great name—a relic, which though now ruined and disused, had doubtless, for a century or two, caused its founder's name to be more venerated by those whom it benefited, than the most costly monument or shrine could have done.

Both little girls were well acquainted with the history of Thomas à Becket; and as they bade good bye to the farmer, and walked slowly on towards the river where Laura was sketching, the conversation naturally fell upon him, and the position and influence of archbishops and ecclesiastics in those days—so different from their present condition in England.

Mrs. Carteret asked her daughter Jane, who was naturally thoughtful, to what she supposed their great influence in former times was owing.

“Was it to their great riches and possessions,

Mamma? The archbishops of Canterbury, for instance, must have been very rich; they owned this castle of Otford, and Knole—and, Mr. Robarts says, altogether sixteen palaces or places in the diocese."

"Their wealth had doubtless a good deal to do with it; for wealth had, at all times, a very undue influence upon society; and the prebishops and abbots of early English history owed a great deal of theirs, certainly, to the fact of their being able to bring so many armed retainers with them at a moment's notice. But there was another much more powerful agent at their command. Can you not guess what that was, Jane? that gave them not only such a hold over the lower classes, but made them often the only people who could undertake offices of trust and importance."

"Oh, I think I know what you mean. They were the only people who had any learning; was it not so?"

"Yes, you are right; education—centred in the clergy; and if knowledge is power, they thus possessed it; and although few knew how to use it so skilfully as Thomas à Becket, the whole body of the clergy was looked upon with reverence by the mass of the people, for its attainments. Thus those who were the teachers, scribes, confidential advisers of the nation, naturally became, in a great measure the masters. But two things concurred in time to alter this state of affairs, and place the clergy and people on a proper footing as regards each other: one was the gradual spread of education, and the other, Jane, was—"

"I can hardly tell, Mamma, what the other cause could have been, unless—unless you mean the Reformation."

"Yes, I do mean the Reformation; the most important event in the political as well as the religious history of our country. When you are older, and can

reason more upon what you read, you will better understand the various effects of this movement upon the social as well as the religious condition of England. But it is now sufficient for you to know that from the moment the clergy ceased to look to the Pope for direction and advancement, they ceased to influence State affairs as they had done, and began to occupy themselves in earnest with questions of faith, and to work as Christian ministers should, amongst their people, for the truth's sake, and for that alone."

"I think I quite understand how that was, Mamma. 'No man can serve two masters,' and England's welfare could never have been the first object with people who considered themselves as half bound to another country."

"Or rather to another master; when you have read more, however, you will see that many influential personages amongst the clergy, long before the Reformation, saw the danger of foreign interference, if only in religious matters. The seed sown by them was a long time before it flourished and bore fruit. That is another subject, however. The early power of the clergy was owing partly to their accumulated wealth, but chiefly to the influence men of education must ever have, over the ignorant and superstitious. Thomas à Becket, long after his death, was revered as a Saint, and pilgrimages made to his tomb at Canterbury—and, I dare say, even to this well, and other places with which he had been connected. We, however, have not retained him in our Saints' calendar. But I see Laura and Miss Lane."

"Well, Laura! have you finished? Are you ready? The carriage is waiting in the road."

"Oh, must we go? I should like to stay ten minutes or a quarter of an hour longer? I drew the tower in so large at first that I could not get it into my paper, and was obliged to begin it all over again. Another ten minutes and I could put in these long evening shadows, if you could stay."

"Miss Lane," said Mrs. Carteret, "must be tired of waiting for you?"

"Oh, no!" replied Lucy Lane, "it is so pleasant sitting here this lovely afternoon, and I am so much interested in this book that I should be very glad to stay a little longer."

"Very well, then," replied Mrs. Carteret; "we will drive on for about half a mile to a brick-field, which I observed this morning, Ada may, perhaps, learn there why the Israelites could not make their bricks without straw, as she wanted to know this morning; and I will send the carriage back for you—but you must not then keep it waiting."

Laura thanked her mother for this arrangement, and they drove off accordingly.

"I see this old tower is built of brick," remarked Jane, looking towards it as she seated herself in the carriage. "There is some stone too about it."

"The dressings, as they are called, are of stone; and a very pretty effect the mixture of the two has," said her mother, "a red brick house, toned down by time, harmonizes well with the green landscape."

"But no brick building could ever look as grand as stone. Do you think it could, mamma?" asked Jane.

"Well, perhaps it is difficult to give to brick the air of solidity that stone possesses; but I can remember one or two fine modern buildings where brick has been employed. The hall at Lincoln's Inn, for example—the ancients introduced brick greatly into their public buildings."

"I am afraid mine was a foolish speech, Mamma; I was comparing our old castles and old houses together, I forgot what you have so often told us, that the form and design, and not the material, decide the character of a building."

"I wonder," said Ada, "what people would do, who had no straw and could not make bricks."

"The ingenuity of man would discover some sub-

stitute; in Cheshire, and several other midland counties of England, houses were at one time built entirely of wood, lath, and plaster, in a style called wattling work. Many curious old houses are still standing in Cheshire with the wood-work painted black and the plaster white; the effect is strange, but not unpleasing."

"And in Switzerland, surely, Mamma, the houses are chiefly wood?" asked Jane.

"Yes; in the villages and on the mountains the chalets are entirely wood, even the roofs."

"The roofs too?"

"Yes. I was once in a village in the Tyrol, where the occupation of almost all the inhabitants was cutting the flat pieces of wood for roofing. They are called schindeln,* and when exposed to the air become a grayish colour, and have very much the appearance, at a little distance, of slates. It is curious to see the immense rafts, with piles of these schindeln packed upon them, floating down a river to the nearest town of importance."

They had now arrived at the brick-field, and Mrs. Carteret, getting out of the carriage, asked permission of a man whom she thought, from his appearance, had something to do with it, to take her party in. It was readily accorded; and the man civilly offered to take them round and explain the process.

Close by the brick-field was the place from which the light-coloured clay was taken, of which these bricks were made, and which had been turned over and exposed to the air during the previous winter. The man showed them first a sort of pit or well into which this clay was put, well moistened with water, and mixed with sand, and then worked about with a wheel which was turned by a horse until it became fine, smooth, and of equal consistency; an aperture at the bottom of this mill allowed the clay to ooze slowly out, when it was carried in shovelfuls to the

* Shingles.

moulder—the workman who fills the wooden moulds after they have been sanded to prevent the clay sticking. This man, after finishing the surface smoothly off, removes the sides of the mould, and places the brick upon a board or tray fastened to a barrow, which a boy wheels to the next workman, the layer.

After describing this simple process to the young party, the civil man took them up to what he called the stacks, which in this small brick-field, were close at hand, and showed them how the layer took up the new moist brick between two pieces of wood, and carefully placed it upon a long level line raised a few inches above the ground, just far enough from its neighbour to allow the air to circulate freely round it. It required, he said, some practice to lay the new plastic brick down, without twisting or bowing it; but two skilful men and a boy, he said, could make and lay some thousand bricks in a day. When about seven or eight rows of bricks have been laid, they are covered over with straw to protect them from the weather; unless the lines are roofed over, as was the case in this field, with a long low wooden shed. "Here," said the man, "they dry slowly, and become pretty hard; but not sufficiently so for use, in this country, without being still further dried or burnt in a kiln like that," pointing to what Ada said looked very like a pile of old bricks.

"Well, Miss," replied the man, "it is but a pile of bricks, to be sure; but the inside ones are all new and fresh, and the old ones only outside, so as to exclude the air and keep in the heat. If you will walk this way, I will show you the ovens below, which are heated with wood; they are closed up now, but you can see the places. When they are ready and cool again we shall pull some of this wall down, and take out the new bricks."

All this the young Carterets saw and comprehended, as well as how the colour of the brick de-

pended upon the clay used, and how ashes were sometimes mixed with it instead of sand, and how all bricks are of one size and shape in this country.

"Well, Mamma," said Ada, "now I have seen what straw is used for in brick-making, I still think the Israelites might have managed to have made their bricks without it. And you know they did—did they not?"

"No; I think not, if you remember what you read this morning, you will find that they had to gather stubble, instead of having straw supplied to them; and yet with this double work upon them, they were expected to make the same quantity of bricks as before. They could not do without the straw; and yet from what you have seen to-day, you think they might?"

"I think so, because the man told us the straw was only wanted for covering over the bricks whilst they dried."

"Very true; but now think a little. You have already heard that there was one difference between the bricks you saw to-day and the early Egyptian bricks—perhaps that difference might necessitate another."

"The only difference we heard of," said Jane, "was that the Egyptian bricks were baked or dried in the sun, and ours are burnt in a furnace. I do not see that that can have anything to do with it."

"I believe it has," replied Mrs. Carteret; "but we will refer, on getting home, to some more learned person than myself. I imagine that bricks baked in the sun probably had not the same tenacity and hardness as those burnt in a kiln; and it was to obtain this hardness that the Egyptians were accustomed to mix finely chopped straw with theirs. It is certain, at any rate, that the straw was wanted for mixing with the clay; not for laying over the bricks, as you see to-day—for in that case the short broken stubble that the Israelites had to collect would not

have done. Now, Ada, you know why the straw was necessary to them."

"Yes, dear Mamma," said Charles; "and it seems to me that you are a regular brick yourself, for you know everything."

His sisters laughed. But Jane, who usually thought over what she heard or saw, said:

"If what the man told us is true, that a clever workman can make several thousand bricks in a day, what an immense number of bricks the Israelites must have made. Think of a whole nation doing nothing all day but making bricks! When they crossed over the Red Sea they were six hundred thousand in number, beside children. What could the King of Egypt have done with all those bricks? Do you think the Pyramids were built with them? Who built the Pyramids? and what were the Pyramids?"

"How many more questions, Jane?" said her mother, smiling. "I cannot answer you very satisfactorily; there have been so many theories upon the subject of the Pyramids. But if you feel interested about them, I will endeavour to find some book that will give you some information upon early brick buildings, and the Pyramids in particular, for our next afternoon reading."





CHAPTER VI.

BRICKS AND EARLY BRICK BUILDING—THE PYRAMIDS, ETC.

As the descendants of Noah were journeying from the East, they came to a vast plain, in the land of Shinar, where they fixed themselves; and, then, in the language of the Bible, they said one to another: "Go to, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly. And they made brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, let us build us a city, and a tower."

• This is the earliest record we have of this ancient manufacture, which, if not contemporaneous with, followed closely upon, the employment of stone in buildings.

The city here spoken of is Babylon, and the tower, Babel. Arab tradition and modern research combined, have fixed the site of the vast brick built city; and if the exact spot, where the lofty tower was raised, cannot be determined positively, sufficient approximation can be made to it, to enable us to see why, for so grand an undertaking, brick should have been preferred to stone.

"In the immediate vicinity of Babylon," says Mr. Layard, "there were no quarries of alabaster, or of limestone, as at Nineveh. The city was built in the midst of an alluvial country, far removed from the hills. The comparatively recent deposits of the

mighty rivers, which have gradually formed the Mesopotamian plains, consist of a rich and very thick clay, consequently stone for building purposes could only be obtained from a distance. The Babylonians were, therefore, content to avail themselves of the building materials which they found on the spot. With the tenacious mud of their alluvial plains, mixed with chopped straw, they made bricks; whilst bitumen and other substances, collected from the immediate neighbourhood, furnished them with an excellent cement."

The nature of the ground, therefore, explains why these early settlers preferred employing the resources at hand, to the vast labour of transporting stone from a distance. In later ages, the temples and edifices of Babylon excited the wonder and admiration of strangers, the meanness of the material being lost in the grandeur of design, and the employment of fine cements and plasters compensating for the want of polish and hardness. Large shapeless mounds are now all that remain of the once great city.

One of the most remarkable of these shapeless masses of earth and masonry, called by the Arabs "The Birs Nimrod, the Palace of Nimrod; and by the Jews, the Prison of Nebuchadnezzar," is thus described by Mr. Layard:—

"It was believed by old travellers to be the very ruins of the Tower of Babel; by some, again, to represent the Temple of Belus, the wonder of the ancient world; and by others, to mark the site of Borsippa, a city celebrated as the high-place of the Chaldean worship; and is now a vast heap of bricks, slag, and broken pottery. The dry nitrous earth of the parched plain, driven before the furious south wind, has thrown over the large mass a thin covering of soil, in which no herb or green thing can find nourishment, or take root. Thus, unlike the moss-clothed mounds of the more fertile district of Assyria, the Birs Nimrod is ever a bare and yellow heap. It rises to the height of 198 feet, and has on its summit a compact mass of

brickwork 37 feet high, by 28 broad, the whole being thus, 235 feet in perpendicular height. Neither the original form or object of the edifice, of which it is a ruin, have hitherto been determined. It is too solid for the walls of a building, and its shape is not that of a tower. It is pierced by square holes, apparently made to admit the air. On one side of it, beneath the crowning masonry, lie huge fragments, torn from the pile itself. The calcined and vitreous surface of the bricks fused into rock-like masses, showed that their fall may have been caused by lightning; and as the ruin is rent almost from top to bottom, early Christian travellers have not hesitated to recognise in them proofs of the Divine vengeance, which, according to tradition, arrested, by fire from Heaven, the impious attempt of the first descendants of Noah.

“Even the Jews, it would appear, at one time, identified the Birs Nimrod with the Tower of Babel. Benjamin of Tudela gives the following curious account of the ruin: ‘The tower built by the dispersed generations, is four miles from Hillah. It is constructed of bricks, called Al-ajur (the wood still used by the Arabs for kiln-burnt bricks). The base measures two miles, the breadth 240 yards, and the height about 100 canna. A spiral passage, built into the tower (from two to ten yards), leads up to the summit, from which there is a prospect of twenty miles, the country being one wide plain, and quite level. The heavenly fire which struck the tower, split it to its very foundation.’

“No traces whatever now remain of the spiral passage, spoken of by the Jewish traveller, and it is most probable he was misled in describing it, by the appearance of the ruins.

“Whatever may have been the original edifice, of which Birs Nimrod is the ruin, or whoever its founder, it is certain that, as yet, no remains have been discovered there more ancient than of the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

Every inscribed brick taken from it, and there are thousands and tens of thousands, bear the name of this King. It must, however, be remembered, that is no proof that he founded the building. He may have merely added to, or rebuilt an earlier edifice. It is, therefore, not impossible, that at some future time more ancient remains may be discovered at the Birs."

Babylonian bricks were either baked in the sun, or kiln burnt—those found at Birs Nimrod being generally of a dark red colour. Some were square, some oblong, the usual size being a foot square, by three and a half inches wide.

Our next record of brick making is also to be found in the Bible.

The history of the Israelites, whilst they sojourned in the land of Egypt, is well known to all. Driven there, originally, by famine, the influence of their brother Joseph, and the mild and amiable character of the reigning king, determined them to abandon their pastoral life for the civilization and luxuries of Egyptian cities. They probably (thinks a recent writer), asked and obtained from the Monarch a grant of land, on condition of their performing certain services. Their rights and freedom were respected, as long as the Memphite dynasty of Pharaohs remained upon the throne; but when a "king arose who knew not Joseph"—one who looked upon them with dislike as foreigners, they were reduced to a state of bondage, their privileges were denied to them, whilst the meanest services were imposed upon them, as was usual upon captives—the King excusing his tyrannical conduct by saying, he found them combining with his enemies against him.

In Egypt, as at Babylon, the alluvial deposits of the Nile, and the facility of obtaining clay, had caused brick to be the material most generally used; and although there remain to us, as far as we know, no buildings constructed by the Israelites, there are numerous other remains in parts of the country, not

inhabited by them, which prove the truth of this; and sculptures still exist on the walls of a tomb, at Thebes, illustrative of the whole process of brick making, which Sir Gardner Wilkinson, says: "being a mere manual occupation, with nothing to stimulate the clever workman to improvement, was only followed by the meanest community. For us, it derives considerable interest, from the detailed notice of it in the Bible, according, as it does, so remarkably with the Egyptian paintings. The brickmakers, however, had not even the satisfaction of working for themselves, for bricks were a government monopoly; and the pay for a tale of them, was a small remuneration for this working in mud. The use of crude bricks (bricks baked in the sun), was universal throughout the country, for private as well as for many public buildings, and the dry climate of Egypt was peculiarly suited to these simple materials. They had the recommendation of cheapness, and even durability; and those made 3000 years ago, are even now as firm and fit for use as when first put up in the reigns of Amunphe and Thothmes, whose names they bear. When made of the Nile mud, or alluvial deposits, they required straw to prevent them cracking; but those formed of clay taken from the torrent beds on the edge of the desert, held together without straw; and crude brick walls frequently had the additional security of a layer of reeds or sticks, placed at intervals to act as binders. The course of the bricks were also disposed occasionally in horizontal curves, or a succession of convex and concave lines throughout the length of the wall. Burnt bricks were not used in Egypt, and when found, they are known to be of Roman time. Enclosures of gardens or granaries, sacred circuits surrounding the courts of temples, walls of fortresses and towns, dwelling-houses, and tombs, and even some few of the temples themselves were built of brick, with stone columns and gateways; and so great was the demand, that the government, foreseeing the profit to be ob-

tained from a monopoly of them, undertook to supply the public at a moderate price, thus preventing all unauthorized persons from engaging in their manufacture; and in order to obtain still more effectually this end, the seal of the King, or some privileged person, was stamped upon the bricks at the time they were made; and bricks so made, are found both in public and private buildings, some bearing the seals of a king, and some the name and title of a priest, or some other influential person. Those which bear no character, either formed part of a tale, of which the first only was stamped, or were from the brick-fields of some private individuals, who had obtained a license from government, to make them for their own consumption. The employment of numerous captives, who worked as slaves, would, in every case, have enabled the government to sell their bricks at a lower price than those persons who had only recourse to free labour; so, without the necessity of a prohibition, they must ever have been an exclusive manufacture; and we find that, independent of native labourers, a great many foreigners were constantly employed in the brick fields at Thebes and other parts of Egypt."

The public buildings and works of Egypt were generally constructed by the slaves, or prisoners of war; and Amosis, or Ames (the Pharaoh that knew not Joseph), choosing to treat the Israelites as a conquered people, employed them in this menial service.

"The Jews," continues Sir Gardner Wilkinson, "were not, of course, excluded from this drudgery; and, like the captives detained in the Thebaid, they were condemned to the same labours in lower Egypt. They not only erected granaries, treasure cities, and many public buildings, for the Egyptain monarch; but the materials used in building them were the work of their hands; and the number of persons constantly employed in brick-making, may be readily accounted for by the extensive supply required and kept by the government for sale.

“To meet with Hebrews in the sculptures, cannot reasonably be expected, since the remains in that part of Egypt, where they lived, have not been preserved; but it is curious to discover other foreign captives occupied in the same manner, overlooked by similar masters, and performing the same labours described by the Israelites in the Bible; and no one can look at the paintings at Thebes, representing brick-making, without a feeling of the highest interest.

“It is not very consistent or logical to argue that because the Jews made bricks, and the persons here introduced are so employed, that they must necessarily be Jews, since Egyptian captives were constantly required to perform the same service, and the great quantity, made at all times, is proved by the number of buildings which still remain constructed of these materials; and a sufficient contradiction is given to that conclusion, by their being said to be working at Thebes, where the Jews never were, and by the name of Asiatic captives being recorded on the same tomb, among which no mention of the Jews is made.”

Thus, it is seen that the labour the Israelites found so irksome, was one always imposed upon the large body of slaves and captives detained in Egypt, and was not only a very extensive, but necessary manufacture, the use of which, in buildings, led to that of enamels, plaster, and paintings on walls, to disguise the meanness of the material, and also to a much more important invention, namely, to that of the arch. This is first met with in some of the crude brick pyramids, and was probably suggested by the difficulty of procuring wooden beams strong enough to support the roofs of chambers, in a country where wood was scarce. The vaulted roof being adopted as a substitute for the beams, the arch was subsequently imitated in stone, and the blocks of stone were arranged precisely as the bricks had been. Pyramids in Egypt were built both of brick and stone, they are supposed to have been tombs; and it is not impossible that the Israelites,

amongst other public works, might have been, as Josephus thinks, employed in erecting some; but, if so, we have no proof of it. All that has been discovered relative to those now remaining, incline us to believe them to have been erected long before the age of the Israelites, and, indeed, to have existed when Abraham visited Egypt. The three large pyramids, known by the name of the Great Pyramids, are the oldest monuments in Egypt, and probably in the world; "but the absence of hieroglyphics, and of every trace of sculpture, preclude the possibility of ascertaining the exact period of their erection, and the names of their founders. From all that can be collected on this head, it appears that Suphis (or Chcoops) and his brother, erected them about the year 2120, B.C." They are built of stone, and the masonry work of the Great Pyramid is perfect—the work evidently of a people far advanced in civilization, acquainted with the use of squared stone, granite, limestone, and probably deeply versed in the higher sciences; for the Great Pyramids are placed so accurately, north and south, that it is the universal opinion of those who have studied the subject, that they were intended for purposes of observation, as well as for the tombs of royal and great personages. This is but a reasonable conclusion. One can hardly conceive that they could have been destined *only* for the comparatively useless purpose of covering poor mortal remains. Those who could plan and carry out works which have been the admiration and wonder of all ages, at the vast expense of labour and material that must have been employed, must have surely had some higher aim in view than the production of a mausoleum for themselves and families; if not, it is well that their names should have sunk into obscurity, and that while the Pyramids stand—monuments of man's ingenuity and progress, even in the very infancy of the world—those, who in their ostentatious vanity intended them as a record of their greatness and power, should sleep with the

meanest of their race, their names barely rescued from complete oblivion, their memories unblest and uncared for, even in the land of their own greatness.

The Pyramids were built in steps, the interstices being filled up, and a covering or surface added at the last, so that the original appearance of the exterior was equal and smooth.

"According to Herodotus, the founder of the Great Pyramid, called, by him, Cheops, was a Prince, whose crimes and tyranny rendered his name odious even to posterity." He closed the temples, forbade the Egyptians to offer sacrifice, and made them all work for him. "Some were employed to cut stones in the quarries of the Arabian hills, to drag them to the river, and put them in boats; others being stationed on the opposite shore to receive them, and drag them to the Libyan hills; and the one hundred thousand men thus occupied, were relieved by an equal number every three months. Of the time passed in this undertaking, ten years was occupied in the construction of the causeway alone, for the transport of the stones, a work scarcely less wonderful, in my opinion, than the pyramid itself. These ten years were occupied exclusively on the causeway, independent of the time spent in leveling the hills on which the pyramid stands, and in making the subterranean chambers intended for his tomb, in an island formed by the waters of the Nile, which he conducted thither by a canal. The building of the Pyramid itself occupied twenty years. It is a square—the greater part is of polished stone, most carefully put together, no one being less than thirty feet long. On the exterior was engraved, in Egyptian characters, the sum expended in supplying the workmen with food," &c.

The second Pyramid is said to have been built by Cephron, the brother of Cheops, a Prince as odious as the former; and the third Pyramid, by Mycerinus, the son of Cheops, who differed from his father and uncle in every respect, being mild in his rule, and just

in all his dealings. The death of a favourite daughter, soon after he ascended the throne, was his first misfortune; and to give especial honour to her funeral, he caused her body to be enclosed in a heifer, made of wood, richly ornamented with gold. It remained, even to Herodotus' time, in a chamber of the Palace of Saïs, where exquisite perfumes burned before it every day, and brilliant illuminations continued throughout the night. An oracle informed Mycerinus, that he should live six years, and die the seventh; and although he represented his piety and upright character, the same answer was returned, with this addition, that his early death was the consequence of his virtues. During this period of his reign he occupied himself in building a Pyramid (the third great Pyramid, which is of granite); but, according to Diodorus, died before its completion. Herodotus also mentions a brick Pyramid, built by King Asychis, which bore the following inscription: "Do not despise me, when compared with the stone pyramids. I am as superior as Jupiter to the other gods; for men plunging poles into a lake, and collecting the mud thus extracted, formed it into bricks, of which they made me."

Various other writers of antiquity have described the Pyramids, and given histories of them; but their accounts cannot be reconciled, and until they are, we shall know nothing positive about their origin. To return to Egyptian bricks and brick-building, we possess relics enough to prove that their manufacture of them was as superior to that of succeeding ages, for strength and durability, as the Roman brick is to our own. In this country remains of Roman brick-buildings may be seen, where the bricks are as sound and good as when first laid. Their mortar or cement was also singularly tenacious; and it is even now a matter of difficulty to detach a portion of an old Roman wall.

Like the Babylonians and Egyptians they stamped their bricks with the name and device of the maker, often adding that of the Consul for the year. Their

bricks were both sun burnt, and kiln burnt, and were generally kept two years before being used. They also mixed straw with the clay, which they preferred either nearly white or of a deep red colour, and made them of three shapes—namely, the Lydian, which was a foot broad, and one and a half long; the tetradoron, which was a foot square; and the pentadoron, which was five palms, or rather more than a foot square, the larger size being preferred for public buildings, as in the great building at Trèves, called the Palace of Constantine.

The Greeks considered perpendicular brick walls much more durable than stone, and introduced them into their greatest public edifices. Brick was so commonly used at Rome, that the Emperor Augustus, referring to his own improvements, said, “that having found it brick, he had left it marble.”

When architecture began to take a place among the fine arts, and the beauty and magnificence of a building to be as much cared for as its utility, a nobler material was naturally preferred; but even then it was not uncommon to build the walls of brick, merely casing them with stone or marble, and in some instances they were stuccoed over; even columns being so made, examples of which are now to be seen at Pompeii. In short, many of the same devices we adopt being employed by the ancients to obtain an appearance of magnificence, at the least possible cost. Great, however, as is the perfection to which we have brought most of our manufactures, it may be doubted whether—if London lay in ruins as many centuries as Babylon and Thebes have—our successors would find anything but crumbling mould, where we have found perfect bricks. Our climate, it is true, is unfavourable to the preservation of material; but still we cannot equal the ancients in the durability of their brick, or the excellence of their cements and mortars.



CHAPTER VII.

THE HAY-FIELD—THE RABBITS—MR. ROBERTS' GRAND-CHILDREN—A VISIT FROM THE VERYANS—EDGAR AND THE PONY—MARY AND ADA—TEA ON THE LAWN—HISTORY OF SUSAN PRICE—HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

THE children were not a little surprised when they got up the next morning, to find that, during their absence the day before, the grass in the Home-meadow had been cut for hay. It was a fine rich heavy crop; and as the weather was warm and settled, Mrs. Price hoped it would dry, be made, and carried very speedily.

"You may run into the field now, and toss the hay about as much as you like, Ada," said Charles to her.

"Oh, I mean to, I assure you," replied his sister; "look what Mrs. Price has just brought me;" and she displayed a small wooden rake and fork. "She is the nicest, most good-natured woman in the world."

"She is certainly very kind to you," remarked Mrs. Carteret.

"This fork and rake belonged to her little granddaughter, when she was here," continued Ada, "and she has lent them to me; and all the maids are going into the field after dinner, to help to make the hay. I suppose, Mamma, I may go there with Charles, this morning. May I not?"

"Yes, my dear, if you will take care of the mowers' scythes and the hay forks."

"The mowers are gone, so we shall not be in their way; and Mrs. Price has promised us one corner of the field, where we may make the hay by ourselves, just as we like."

"That is a very nice arrangement. I must thank her, indeed, for her good nature to you."

"But that is not all, Mamma, that she has done. What do you think she has given me, for my own, to take care of?—guess?"

"A little garden!"

"No! guess again."

"A brood of chickens!"

"No! guess again."

"A kitten,—not a kitten! well, then, I must give it up; for it cannot be a sheep, or a cow, or a horse, and I can't think of anything else in the animal line."

"Must I tell you? they only came yesterday, and were put into the hutch, and I have been feeding them with cabbage and lettuce leaves this morning."

"What—rabbits!"

"Yes, Mamma, two beautiful rabbits; one is all white, and the other black and white. Her little grand-daughter used to keep them when she was here."

"I did not know before, that Mrs. Price had a grand-daughter," said Mrs. Carteret; "but this explains the swing, and the chair saddle for the pony."

"Oh, Mamma, she has several grand-children; but they live in Paris, and their father is a Frenchman."

"That is still more strange; but you seem to know the family history, Ada!"

"Mrs Price often tells me about them. One is called Adeline, is not that a grand name; but it was Louise who was here with her mother, two years ago; and she was just my age, eight years old, and she spoke French as well as English."

"Of course," said Jane, "if her father was a Frenchman."

"But, Ada, about these rabbits," asked her mother. "You can consider them your own whilst you are here, but you cannot, you know, take them away with you."

"I know that, Mamma, very well; but Mrs. Price says I may give them away, when I go, to any little girl who likes to have them."

"For my part," remarked Jane, "I wonder any body cares to keep rabbits. I think they are most uninteresting animals: they do nothing but eat and sleep."

"Shut up in a hutch," said Laura; "what can they do else?"

"Converse with each other, perhaps, in rabbit fashion, about the greediness of their neighbours, the pigs; or make a profound study of lettuce leaves. I wonder you don't like rabbits, Jane; for they are always contemplating the vegetable kingdom, like you," said Charles, who used to quiz his sisters for their industry, being himself intensely idle during his holidays. "I should say that both with you and the rabbits, the study of plants was quite a *devouring* passion."

His sisters laughed at his attempt at a pun; and, highly delighted with it himself, he ran off with Ada to the hay-field, and amused himself with burying her in the hay, making her sit down while he piled it up all round her, and upon her, until she used to scream out she was suffocated, and jump up and shake it all off her. They then raked their corner into long rows, as they saw the haymakers doing. After having turned and shaken it about in every direction; and, at last, tolerably tired and very hot, went in to rest themselves and get cool before dinner.

In the cool of the evening Mrs. Carteret and her daughter, Laura, went to call at the rectory upon Miss Lane, to inquire whether she was tired after her

day's excursion. They were rather surprised when they reached this usually quiet abode, with its pretty, well-kept grounds, to hear the sounds of children's voices.

"I fancy, Mamma," said Laura, "that Mr. Roberts' daughter and her children must be arrived. Miss Lane told me yesterday, that they were expected soon."

"In that case," replied Mrs. Carteret, "we will only leave a message, and not go in."

In this intention, however, they were frustrated; for Mr. Roberts, hearing a ring at the bell, insisted upon their going in, and being introduced to his daughter, Mrs. Veryan, who had married a gentleman of property in the West of England, and was accustomed to spend some part of every summer, with her father, as the air of Cornwall was too relaxing for her in hot weather. She had arrived rather unexpectedly, her father having only heard in the morning that she was coming; but Mr. Veryan had some business of importance in London, and he thought it a good opportunity for his wife and children to make their long journey. Their children were three in number—Edgar, a boy about Charles's age, or a little older, a light-haired, blue-eyed, merry-looking fellow, with a frank open expression of countenance, which led Mrs. Carteret to hope that he might not be an undesirable companion for her boy; and two girls, Edith, the eldest of the family, thirteen years old; and Mary, the youngest, a rather naughty little girl of nine.

"You must have had a long fatiguing journey from Cornwall," said Mrs. Carteret.

"To-day, we have come no further than from London, where we have left Mr. Veryan. It is, however, not so tiresome a journey now we have a railroad, as it was when we were three, and sometimes four, days on the road."

"Yes," said Mr. Roberts, "railroads are a great boon to those whose nearest relations are settled far

away from them. When my daughter first married, it was much easier to go to Paris than to Cornwall."

"And yet, what opposition people made at first to railroads," said Mrs. Vervan. "I remember a neighbour of ours driving away the surveyors with pitchforks and poles, as if they were burglars."

"We are but grown up children, after all; sometimes violently in love with everything new, and sometimes as violently opposed to it; but when people found that railroads carried a little golden letter of introduction with them, they soon opened their gates to them, and let them in," said Mr. Robarts.

The young people, meantime, were making acquaintance with each other. Laura and Miss Lane, although not of an age, had already found much similarity of taste and feeling, and seemed likely to become good friends. Miss Lane was the eldest of a large and not rich family, and had been accustomed from her infancy to give up her own wishes and inclinations, and to consult the tempers and feelings of others; she had grown up, consequently, self-forgetting and amiable, and was ready to adapt her conversation to those a little younger, and to feel an interest in subjects which had an interest for them. Her young cousins, the Vervans, the children of affectionate and anxious parents, whose ample means enabled them to give them many indulgences and pleasures, were perhaps a little spoilt; and Mr. Robarts had been secretly rejoicing in the society of the young Carterets, as likely to be of use to his grand-children, by showing them that young people may be happy without having their every little wish gratified, and happier for being occupied, and obedient to those about them.

Mrs. Carteret did not pay a long visit; but, before leaving, invited the children to come down the day after the next, to spend an afternoon in the hay-field, and drink tea out of doors. Her own party, at home, were much pleased at the prospect of some young companions of their own age; but Laura confided to her

mother, that she should have been quite satisfied if Lucy Lane had been Mr. Roberts' only visitor.

"She is, Mamma, so kind and good-tempered. The Miss Veryans, I think, are rather rude, for they not only spoke very crossly to each other, but laughed at something I said, as if it was very ridiculous."

"Do not judge too hastily, my dear girl," replied her mother. "I have no doubt that Lucy Lane is a very nice girl; but I cannot think that Mr. Roberts' grandchildren can be otherwise than well-disposed children, in spite of faults, that may be corrected. They are so much with him every year, that they must derive advantage from seeing his goodness."

The young Veryans came down to the Farm on the appointed afternoon. Miss Lane and their mother were to follow later, so that Laura, with all her disinclination for Edith Veryan's society, was obliged, in common with Jane, to give up her attention to her, as Charles and Edgar had naturally taken at once to each other, and disdaining all forms and ceremonies, became very good friends, in a very few minutes, at least as soon as out of Mrs. Carteret's and their sisters' hearing; and Ada and Mary, being nearer in age than the rest, started off together to the hay-field, where, after a good deal of hard work in raking and tossing the hay, they finally made up a great mound, hollowed it out a little in the middle, and got into it; and asking one of the haymaker's to pile it up a little round them, they sat there quietly happy, satisfied that no one would find them out, telling each other tales of their rabbits, their occupation at home, their last birthday presents, interspersed with comments of their governess' severity, the impossible things she required them to do, &c.; in which last subject, it must be confessed, that Mary Veryan had much more to say than Ada, who was, after all, fond enough of her kind teacher, Miss Murray, who, far from being severe, had gained the confidence of her pupils, by invariable

justice, and by firm but kind treatment. Mrs. Carteret, too, was the last person to encourage any appeal from Miss Murray, to her authority; and her pupils knowing this, accorded her obedience cheerfully, and were generally anxious to merit her approbation. The Miss Veryans must have been less fortunate, if Mary Veryan's stories were correct; however, be that as it may, here they sat, well amused with each other.

Edgar and Charles had gone off to the farmyard, where they occupied themselves in various ways, making ducks and drakes on the pond, climbing up the stacks, ascending every ladder, and entering every loft. At last, Edgar descried the black pony loose in the field, and announced his intention of catching and riding him.

"I don't think," said Charles, "that Mr. Price would mind you doing so; but had you not better ask first?"

"Ask first! What harm can a canter up and down the field do?"

"Well," replied Charles, "you must catch him first; and I don't believe you can do that."

"Oh, don't you! Well, I'll soon show you that I'll catch him, and saddle him, too, although I can ride him without a saddle, if that's all."

This was true enough; for Edgar, brought up in the country, with a pony of his own, had early learnt to mount and manage him, and was a fearless and good rider for his age, often accompanying his father in his rides across country, and taking a low Cornish dyke in good style.

"I know a fellow," continued Edgar, "near us, who can ride any horse without saddle or bridle, and mount, too, with one spring from the ground; but show me the stable. I must have a halter, you know."

They soon found what they wanted; then Edgar taking a handful of hay in one hand, and hiding the halter in the other behind his back, approached the

unconscious pony, slowly and cautiously; and, offering him the hay, as soon as he came near enough to put his hand upon him, slipped the noose cleverly over his head, and led him away in triumph.

"And now for the saddle," he cried, as he led the pony back to the stable, where an old saddle was hanging up, which he very soon had down, and put on very expeditiously, as well as the bridle. When all was ready, he led him out; but, just as he was entering the field, they encountered Mr. Price, who seemed much surprised.

Charles coloured violently; but Edgar guessing at once who it was, said:

"Will you allow me, Sir, to ride your pony up and down the field a bit?"

"You seem to have taken French leave already, young gentleman," answered Mr. Price, who, though a very good-natured man in the main, never allowed any one to take a liberty with him; and reasoning within himself, "if I give way to these boys now, I shall have them doing the same thing again, and riding my pony to death in the sun," he went on to say—"I never make use of other people's property myself, without first knowing if I may do so, and I never allow any one to make use of mine, unless I tell them they may; and, therefore, young gentlemen, no offence, but I'll trouble you to take that saddle and bridle off that pony, and take him back to the field, where you found him."

Charles was disconcerted and ashamed. Edgar, however, carried it off with a merry laugh, and said:—

"You're quite right. I should not allow it myself, I know, with my pony; but, as Carteret, here, said I couldn't catch and saddle him, I thought I'd show him I could; so now, I'll undo what I've done, and you'll just excuse us this once."

Something in the open fearless manner of the boy pleased the old farmer, who said:—

"I can't go back, young sir, from what I've said now; but I'll tell you what I'll do, I will send the pony down some day to the Rectory, if you like to ride him, for I think, if you know as much as I fancy you do, you won't over-ride or hurt him. You're welcome to ride him, only I choose to be asked first—remember!"

"Thank you," said Edgar—"that will be capital, for Grandpapa does not like my riding his slow, fat old Bess. Come along Charles, let's unsaddle him, and go off to the hay-field."

Just as Mary Veryan was confiding a most confidential affair to Ada, they were suddenly buried in hay.

"That's that rude boy, Edgar," she exclaimed angrily, as she jumped up, and shaking the load of hay off from her, ran after the two boys, who were laughing heartily at what they had done.

Ada was highly amused, thought it a good joke, and pelted her brother and Edgar with handfuls of hay; but Mary Veryan was really angry at being disturbed and upset; and getting nothing but laughs and jokes about it from the rest, and being hot and tired with running, she sat down and fairly burst into tears, to Ada's great surprise, as well as that of her sisters, who entered at this moment the field.

"Is she hurt," said Laura, going up to her. "What can be the matter?"

"She is only cross, I daresay," said Edith; "don't take any notice of her."

Ada explained the matter as well as she could.

"Charles," said Laura, reprovingly, "you have been rude, I am sure, and it is very ill-mannered to a girl, and our guest."

Charles didn't attempt to excuse himself, but only laughed; and turning to Edgar, said: "Allow me to introduce you to my eldest sister, a distinguished artist, and inspector of her younger brother's and sisters' morals; and to my second sister, Jane, the

celebrated botanist, and an investigator of all sorts of sciences; and to Miss Ada, commonly called the Squirrel, of whose wonderful activity you have just seen proofs."

"Charles, be quiet," exclaimed Ada, who did not like any allusion to her tree climbing. "Let us go away and leave these boys to themselves," she said to Mary, who had by this time dried her tears.

"Let us go down to the other side of the field," said Edith, "I want to see how they make the haystack."

Edgar and Charles, however, found too much amusement in covering their sisters with hay, to let them alone; but the good temper of the Carterets communicated itself to the Veryans, who soon joined in the fun, and much laughing, and a great deal of running and screaming went on, until a servant came out to summon them to tea upon the lawn.

"How hot and tired you look, my dear children," said Mrs. Carteret to them, as they appeared in obedience to their summons. "You had better go up stairs and smooth your hair before tea, Laura—take your young friends to my room. Ada, my dear child, come here, you are in a perfect fever, and covered with bits of hay and dust."

"Oh, never mind, Mamma, I shall soon be cool; we have had such fun."

"That, I believe; but now go up, and make yourself ready for tea; do not wash your face, remember, or drink cold water until you are cool."

Mrs. Veryan, meantime, had given the same caution to her daughter, and the whole party went into the house. Mary preferred accompanying her friend, Ada, to her room.

"What a large bed," she exclaimed, when she saw the great four-post bed, with its white hangings; "and a capital place for hide and seek, under the bed. Last year, when our cousins were with us, we had

such famous games of hide and seek, all over the house, in every room, and ours, you know, is a very large house; but there was no getting under the beds, they were all so low. I did just manage to hide under one; but, there I was, I could hardly get out again; and as for Edith, she nearly brought a large wardrobe down upon her, as she was getting into it. But, oh dear, I am so thirsty. I must have some water." And as she spoke, she was just going to pour out some of the fresh spring water from the water bottle."

Ada put her hand upon her and said: "You must not, indeed, you must not drink whilst you are so hot, you know, your Mamma told you so."

"Yes, I know she did; but I am so very, very thirsty; and I know, if I said so, she would let me have some water."

"Not till you are cooler, I think. I, too, am thirsty; but I would not drink, on any account, until Mamma said I might; and, besides, we shall have tea directly."

"But I cannot wait; and I know Mamma would let me have it if she was here, for she always lets me have what I want, so I shall just take a little."

Ada was silent. She was as forgetful, and consequently disobedient at times, as other children of her age; but direct violation of a mother's wishes, immediately after they were given, appeared to her so wrong, that she could not help looking shocked. Mary observed this, and said—

"Well Ada, then, I won't take any; but remember, I did not promise Mamma, I would not."

"Perhaps not; but she wished you not, you know."

Mary abstained from taking the water, less, I fear, out of obedience to her Mamma's wishes, than because she did not wish her new friend to think ill of her. This, indeed, was not the motive that should have influenced her; but it is an instance how, even in a trifling matter, we may by precept and example, in

absence of any higher principle, prevail on others to do what is right; and, therefore, how responsible we are for the effect of every action of our lives upon those around us.

When the little girls descended to the garden again, and when Mrs. Vervan said to her daughters: "I hope, my dears, you have remembered what I said to you about drinking."

Mary could not help colouring, but was very glad she was able to say, before all the party, that she had not taken any; and her mother kissed her and said: "I was afraid, my dear, you might have forgotten yourself, as I know you are such a thirsty little soul."

The long tea-table was laid out on the lawn, on the shady side of the garden. It looked very inviting to the hungry and thirsty young people, with its large dishes of fruit, home-made cakes, white and brown bread, and fresh sweet-looking pats of butter. Laura presided over the tea, and Edgar and Charles were seated on either side of her, that they might make themselves useful in handing the cups, and running for more hot water when required.

"This is very pleasant," said Mr. Robarts, looking round with satisfaction at his only child and her children, and at the happy young faces of the Carteret family. "We want two more here to make it perfect."

"Oh, yes," said Ada, "I do so wish Papa was here; and your Papa, too, of course," to Mary.

"I am daily expecting Mr. Carteret down," said Mrs. Carteret, turning to Mr. Robarts; "he will walk in some evening when we are not expecting him, I daresay."

"At any rate," replied Mr. Robarts, "in time for my grand strawberry feast, next week; and for my gipsy tea party, by and bye."

"Gipsy party!" cried Edith and Mary in a breath. "Grandpapa! what do you mean?"

"What I say, my dears. I mean to invite my

young friends here, to join you in an afternoon's wanderings in the green lanes, and a tea-drinking on some common, where you must make your own fire, and boil your own kettle, before you can make tea; but we must wait till their brother Hugh comes home, for that. My strawberry feast, I can't put off, for the strawberries are already so ripe, that they seem to say, 'why don't you eat us;' so that must take place the beginning of next week."

"Oh the gipsy party will be delightful," exclaimed Mary Veryan. "What a dear, kind old grandpapa you are."

"It pleases me, my dear, to give you pleasure," he answered kindly; "for the truest happiness consists in making others happy. You will find that out, every day, as you grow older."

"This is a very charming place," said Mrs. Veryan, as she looked round upon the gay little garden, and pretty old-fashioned looking house.

"It was never intended for a farm-house," said Mrs. Carteret.

"It was inhabited, before Mr. and Mrs. Price came, by what is called a gentleman farmer. He added the porch and conservatory, and laid out the garden," replied Mr. Roberts.

"And have the Prices been here long?" asked Mrs. Carteret.

"Some ten or twelve years, not more," was the answer; "and, but for a very excellent daughter, they might never have been here at all."

"Pray how was that?" inquired Mrs. Carteret with interest; "Ada has been talking to me of Mrs. Price's grandchildren; her daughter, I hear, married a Frenchman, or rather a Swiss, but settled in Paris, where they are now very wealthy people, although he was but a courier when she married him, and his wife began life in a lower grade of service still."

"Would there be any objection to telling us their history?" inquired Mrs. Carteret.

"Not in the least," answered Mrs. Veryan, "I am sure; for Mrs. Price is too proud of her daughter's success, to be ashamed of her first step. She would tell you the whole history herself, if asked; so, my dear father, I am sure, you may do the same."

"Very well, my dear, I will."

The young people gathered round him to listen, whilst some seated themselves on the ground at his feet, and others drew their chairs nearer, he began as follows:—

"When I first knew Mr. and Mrs. Price, some thirty years ago, they were not the prosperous people they now are. He had been bailiff to a large farmer, and having acquired a great deal of knowledge and experience, whilst thus employed, was tempted to throw up a regular and ascertained provision, and to begin farming on his own account. He had married a small farmer's daughter, and his wife was then, what she is now, one of the most industrious, active, honest, and obliging of her sex. He had great confidence in her, and she urged this step, feeling that his abilities and energy might be devoted with more advantage to an occupation, where he would be sole master, and which, if profitable, would be more advantageous to his family.

"He began prudently, renting a very small farm, which required comparatively little outlay, and few hands. For the first few years he had no reason to be dissatisfied with the step he had taken. He secured a certain profit, necessarily small, from the limited nature of his farm; but sufficient, as he thought, to justify him, ere long, in removing to a larger farm, not very far off. This, however, he did not do; for although the landlord preferred him to a man of some capital, because he knew him to be prudent and conscientious, and, moreover, a careful and progressive agriculturist, a bad season occurred just before he concluded the agreement, which threw him

back so much, and put him to so much inconvenience, that he decided he was not justified in undertaking greater responsibility, at that time. 'If,' he argued, 'the want of capital hampers me so much when in a small way, it may be absolute ruin to me on a larger scale. I must be content where I am.' He had reason to rejoice at this just and honest decision, for a succession of wet springs, injured his hay crops, and bad harvests, from other causes, made farming a losing concern to most men for the next few years, and ruin to those who had done what Price would not do—undertaken large concerns, with small capital. He found it very hard work to get on at all, to pay his rent and feed his family. The most rigid economy and constant self-denial were practised by all. But matters did not improve, and at last Mr. and Mrs. Price decided that it would be best to put out their two children, where, if they did not earn much, they would at least be fed, and the family expenses consequently diminished. The boy, about fourteen, was placed with a draper at Croydon; and for the daughter, Susan, I was fortunate enough to get the place of under housemaid at Lady Fleming's. She was a nice, pretty, healthy-looking girl of sixteen, good-humoured, and obliging; and, instead of bewailing her fate at having to leave home, she was thankful for the relief her absence offered to her parents, and determined to do her duty, and give satisfaction to her new employers. The respectability of her family had been the inducement to Lady Fleming to take an untried girl, and Susan was determined to uphold the credit of the family. She had been about a year in this situation, her father, meantime, having had greater difficulties than ever to contend with, when Lady Fleming's old and valued maid was taken ill, a circumstance which influenced the whole of Susan's after life; for Lady Fleming, unwilling to have a stranger about her for the short time she expected to be deprived of her maid's services, settled that the upper

housemaid should look out for an assistant in the village, and that Susan Price should wait upon her, and attend upon the poor sick maid. Susan's active, clever habits and intelligence, pleased her mistress; she soon became handy and quick in a maid's duties, and her kind heart naturally inclined her to be attentive to the invalid, who was, after all, many months before she was able to resume her place about her mistress. When the time came, however, that she was able to do so, Lady Fleming called upon Mrs. Price, and told her how much pleased she had been with her daughter's conduct; adding, that she thought an under-housemaid's place was hardly good enough for so quick and clever a girl as Susan, and that, if Mrs. Price pleased, she would get her a place as young lady's-maid, with some relations of hers; and in order to qualify her for this position, she would send her for six months to a dressmaker's in London, and give her besides a few lessons in dressing hair. Mrs. Price would, of course, have accepted this offer gratefully, at once, but there was one drawback, this family was going to travel abroad, and reside on the continent for some years. They were very anxious to find a good and conscientious English girl to place about the younger daughters, and Lady Fleming felt sure that, with a little instruction, Susan Price was the person they required. Mr. and Mrs. Price long hesitated and wavered, unwilling to part with their daughter, but unable to keep her themselves, they, at last, settled that Susan should decide, and she at once accepted the proposal. An affectionate and dutiful daughter, she had the natural curiosity of a young girl to see the world; and all the trials of the next six months, with their hard work and insufficient food, could not prevent her from feeling delighted at the prospect before her. She went abroad with this family, who were four or five years travelling in Germany and Italy. She was happy, and her employers satisfied. At last, Mr. and Mrs. Arden returned, with their children, to Paris; and Susan,

after six years' absence, came back one day to see her parents. She found them more comfortable, but still struggling and anxious. 'If I had had but a little capital,' said Mr. Price, 'I could have made my fortune more than once; however, if I have not done so, my neighbour, Blair, has, by following my advice.' Susan returned to Paris—she was much attached to Mr. and Mrs. Arden, and their family; and, moreover, had another attraction there, she was engaged to become the wife of their former courier. He was a Swiss, a prudent, saving, and industrious fellow. Mr. and Mrs. Arden thought it no bad match for Susan; and in process of time she was married, and removed to a little lodging, with her husband, where she endeavoured to assist him, by taking in needlework, more especially children's things, which she had a great deal of experience in making whilst with the Ardens; they, interested in Susan's welfare, gave her all they could to do, and she was soon fully occupied, and found this employment a great resource during her husband's long and necessary absences. But this did not satisfy Susan's active enterprising mind; she formed a grand scheme, and when her eldest child was about half a year old, she laid it before her husband.

"Her plan was, to open a small shop for the sale of children's clothes and dresses, and to employ for this purpose the little sum of money she had saved whilst in service, getting her husband to add something, to be re-paid by her out of the profits.

"Lemaitre had great confidence in his wife; he had seen and esteemed for some years the integrity of her character, as well as her energy and industry; but before consenting, he placed everything before her. In answer to his objections, she replied: 'That, although it was true that she had then as much work as she could undertake, and that it paid her well, and, together with his gains, amply sufficed for their living, it was employment which depended solely on her personal efforts, and might leave her at any moment,

if ill or laid up, or occupied with a young child, as she then was, she was unable to attend to it, and consequently, disappointed people, and lost her connection. A business, she might superintend, to a certain extent, at all times; and in forming one thus early, she considered they should be providing for their children, by leaving them, at any rate, better means of subsistence than domestic service offered. Besides,' she added, 'there will come a time when your health and strength will not stand these constant fatiguing journeys. Supposing my shop answered, there would be occupation there for you in attending to the books and accounts, to say nothing of the happiness of being always together, instead of as now, always separated.' Perhaps this last argument prevailed, for Susan obtained her husband's consent, and they soon removed to a little abode in a good street, upon which Susan had for some time fixed her mind, and opened a modest little shop for children's dresses and ready-made clothes.

" 'In London,' said Susan, 'we are always running after French fashions, perhaps in Paris English modes may be as popular.'

" Accordingly she rather studied to make her little dresses and clothes after the English style for children, and her English friends gave her all the assistance they could, by sending her patterns, and recommending her. The first year or two she did little more than pay her expenses, and her husband often said to her—

" 'Susan, you have less profit, and more care and labour than before you kept a shop.'

" But she would answer—

" 'Patience, my good friend, I am making connection. I am sowing seed, which will blossom and bare fruit in its due season. We cannot plant and reap in a day.'

" So, with unabated courage, she worked on; she had many discouragements, many losses, bad debts,

dishonest work people; but she went on cheerfully, and at last made a start. Her business assumed a certain definite form—it had rooted and taken firm hold of the soil—it began to spread, increase, and prosper. They removed from their little shop, with its single room at the back to a more commodious and spacious tenement; and very soon after, a little event occurred, which contributed to Madame Lemaitre's success, and helped to make her what she now is, one of the most prosperous trades-persons in Paris.

“The children of an English lady, who employed Madame Lemaitre, were playing in the gardens of the Tuileries, their simple child-like dresses attracted the attention of the Duchess of R——, a French lady of fashion. She inquired of their nurses where their dresses were made, and immediately sent for and employed Susan; and to her recommendations she subsequently owed the patronage of King Louis Phillipe's daughters-in-law. Madame Lemaitre had extended her business, by making grown-up people's things also: and I understand that her house is now the vogue for wedding trousseaux; in short, from that moment her prosperity was unbounded. Lemaitre, as she had hoped, gave up a courier's life, and found plenty to do in assisting his wife with the books and accounts; and when my daughter went to Paris, a few years ago, she will tell you how she found my old friend, Susan. But first, I must explain to you why I call her a good daughter. The first considerable sum of money that they realized, she sent to her father, telling him she had always felt that the want of capital had been the only bar to his success as a farmer, and she felt sure that she and her husband could not have a safer investment for their savings, than in lending the money to him. You can imagine the old man's feelings of gratitude and pleasure. He took this farm, and time has proved that the confidence of the Lemaitres was not misplaced. Mr. Price is

now a man of substance. Susan's funds in his hands have increased fivefold and tenfold, and she and her children will, hereafter, reap the benefit of their parents' generous confidence."

"A very interesting story," said Mrs. Carteret, when Mr. Roberts had finished speaking. "No wonder Mrs. Price is proud of such a daughter. And you saw her not long ago in Paris?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Veryan; "I went to her shop, in the Rue St. Honoré, when on asking to see Madame Lemaitre, and mentioning my name, a very elegantly dressed woman, who had been standing in front of me, with a bonnet on, turned round and shook me warmly by the hand. Anywhere else, I assure you, I should not have recognised the unpretending Susan Price, in the lady-like person before me. She was just about to start for her country house, at Montmorency, and so could not then stay to talk to me; but she pressed me so much to go and see her, that I did so one day, after we had visited St. Denis, which was on our road. I found her in a charming little villa, which was thoroughly comfortable, and well ordered. Their children they were educating with care, but sensibly; bringing the daughters up to the business, and placing the sons in other suitable occupations. She seemed thoroughly happy, in fact, one of the happiest people I ever saw; it was then she told me the story of her struggles upwards, that my father has given you."

"I do not wonder," remarked Mrs. Carteret, "at her being happy, after doing so much for others, as well as for herself."

"She is a very lucky person I think," said Edith Veryan, "to jump from being a servant into a rich person."

"Her jump, my dear," said her grandfather, "was a long one, if Susan's success can be called by such a name. Her luck consisted in having been brought up honestly and actively, everything else was owing to her own energy and enterprise, combined with that, with-

out which nothing great has ever been achieved in this life—I mean persevering industry.”

“And with which,” added Mrs. Carteret, “almost anything and everything may be accomplished.”

“Very true,” resumed Mr. Roberts—“hard work and fixedness of purpose, are better things than what are called talent and genius; perhaps, after all, they are much the same. Remember, dear children, if ever you have an object in view, and that object is a worthy one, never give it up until you have accomplished your purpose. I am much inclined to agree with a distinguished physician, who had raised himself to a high scientific eminence, and was a self-educated man, ‘that a man may be anything he chooses to be.’”

“But do you not think,” asked Laura Carteret, “that some people are born with greater talents than others? Do you not believe in natural genius? Think of our painters and poets—think of Burns. Look at Chantrey and Thorburn.”

“I think, my dear, it is so impossible to say how much education has to do in improving our capacities, the education I mean that a child receives insensibly from its birth, its position in life, and the characters of those who surround it, that we have no means of ascertaining correctly how far the apparent superiority of one person’s capacity over another is natural or not. Certainly some people seem from their earliest age to have warmer feelings, and more observant powers than others, and these people may become poets and painters, the one cultivating the loving nature, and the quick feelings—the other an eye and taste for harmony and beauty.” But you do not suppose that a poet was ever a poet without much labour and study. How many years are spent in preparation for the work that makes a fame; how many sheets are written and re-written, before the lines that make the writer’s name illustrious are penned; and as for painters and sculptors, a long and arduous

apprenticeship must be served by them. But that hard work and study will make a good artist of one, who seemed to have shown no early taste for art, we know, and may read in the 'Lives of the Painters;' but I am getting prosy," said the old man.

"What do you think I could achieve, Grandpapa," said Hugh, with much gravity, "if I fixed my mind on it, and worked hard?"

"I think you might achieve being at the top of your class, if you had not made up your mind to remain at the bottom," answered his grandfather.

This turned the laugh against Hugh, and shortly after the party separated; the Carterets promising to go one day, the following week, to eat strawberries and cream at the Rectory.





CHAPTER VIII.

LAURA IN TROUBLE—HER SKETCH—DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES—A ROYAL ARTIST—ARY SCHEFFER'S LETTER—THE USE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

"My dear Laura, what are you moaning and groaning and sighing so about?" inquired her mother, who was reading near one window whilst Laura was drawing at a table near the other."

"Oh! Mamma, it is this drawing Mr. Crayon gave me to copy, I cannot manage it, it is most provoking! this is the second copy I have begun, and it seems to me worse than the first. I think water colours so provoking and difficult, that perhaps I had better give up trying any more. I shall never succeed, I am sure, and I am only wasting my time and my paper."

"Then perhaps you had better give it up," said Mrs. Carteret, "but why should you never succeed, and what is the overpowering difficulty in your drawing?" so saying, she rose and approached Laura's table.

"The difficulty is in the foreground. I ought to put in the colour at once, so as to make it sharp and clear; here, you see, I have been afraid, and put too little at first, and in adding more, I have made it muddy and thick; in this second copy, intending to put enough, I have put too much, and spoilt all the drawing."

"Not so, your mistake can be rectified; take a sponge and clean water and wash over the whole,—thus—now deepen the colour in your near trees a little,—will not that bring matters round?"



Laura in Difficulties.—Page 139.

"Yes, Mamma, thank you; but I cannot draw if you look over me."

Mrs. Carteret returned to her seat.

"Don't think me ungrateful, dear Mamma," said Laura apologetically, "but you know I am nervous, and can neither play nor draw if any one looks over me."

"I know it, Laura, and more's the pity; for if you cannot conquer that feeling, which arises from want of confidence in your own powers, you will not, I fear, succeed in anything you undertake; but perhaps when you have overcome the mechanical difficulties of colouring, as you draw well, and are fond of it, this nervousness may go off. Remember Mr. Roberts' advice; if you have an object in view, not to relinquish it until accomplished."

"It is good advice, I have not forgotten it; but I cannot think with him, that one may do, or be anything one chooses."

"Why not? do you see, for instance, any reason why you should not succeed in colouring your landscapes as well as you draw them in?"

"Certainly not; but I see no hope of doing more. I might set my mind upon doing something original, worthy of an artist—I might never lose sight of my object, but I should never accomplish it."

"Not if you worked hard and perseveringly?"

"I should never be able to work as hard as those work who become artists. You would not like me to go to an academy, and shut myself up all day as if my future livelihood depended on it. I see now why the humbly born so often turn out great. Instead of having, as people say, less opportunity, they have more, they can do as they like; they are not hampered by proprieties and improprieties; they are not obliged to go and wash their hands for dinner, just as they are shading a tree or touching a distance; they need not give up the study of art for the study of an uncouth tongue like German; in short, Mamma,

I do not believe that any girl like myself, in my rank of life, who has so many things she must do, and so many things she may not do, can ever achieve any success in anything, even in music. When is the best amateur equal to a professional singer?"

Mrs. Carteret smiled at her daughter's warmth. "I might perhaps have been more inclined to agree with you, had I not just read, in this very book which I hold in my hand, the tale of one, who, with all the drawbacks attending such a position as yours, which I am ready to allow are against you, trifling as they are, and many more, because her rank was great, and entailed duties and brought calls upon her time which you will never have, did succeed in achieving her heart's desire; and a girl like you, and a princess, she produced one of the most beautiful of modern statues, casts of which you have often seen and admired."

"Oh! Mamma, is this so? A princess! who was she? but then a princess, what masters she would have, what aid."

"Her master in the art of modelling was a novice like herself; but shall I read you the account, whilst your drawing is drying?"

"Oh! if you please."

Mrs. Carteret took up her book, which was Mrs. Grote's life of Ary Scheffer, and began to read from it a letter to his brother, written at the time of the death of the Princess Marie Clementine of Wurtemberg, the gifted daughter of Louis Phillippe of France.

ARY SCHEFFER'S LETTER TO HIS BROTHER.

"To furnish you, my dear Arnold, with what you require of me, viz., some particulars respecting the Princess Marie of Orleans is no easy task for me to attempt.

"She was brought up after the manner of all princesses, by Madam de Malet, a person of education, and religiously disposed, but having exceedingly

narrow and restricted ideas of things. The Princess was, as a child, impertinent, heedless, and wild to a degree; yet she learned what was taught—languages, history, and so forth—though habitually indulging in saucy sallies at the expense of her instructors. One of these (M. Pradher) managed to control the Princess, and by inflexible sternness, untinged by angry temper, to inspire his pupil with respect. He also directed (and with ability) her musical talent, which, in itself, was above the ordinary level.

“Such lessons as, from the age of twelve years and onwards, I had been in the habit of giving her, were never much else than an amusing pastime, either for master or pupil. The Princess made but slight progress, and could at no time draw a head correctly from the plaster model. Upon the marriage of her elder sister, this young girl, till now careless and unreflecting, became all at once serious and pensive; she entreated me earnestly to afford her instruction of a nature to occupy and interest her mind and to distract her attention from the loss she had sustained; but she added, that ‘as to setting her to copy, it was too tiresome an affair by half for her to attempt it,’ ”

“Oh Mamma!” here interrupted Laura, “copying is tiresome, how entirely I agree with her.”

“Yes, my dear, but you must walk before you can run, copy before you compose; but to proceed”—

“So she took to composing historical subjects, touching them in with water colour. The very first that she made, revealed to me the existence of undoubted talent, and of her imaginative faculty. Within the space of two years she executed more than fifty drawings; all of them showing a certain power of design, carried out with originality and good general effect, though faulty in drawing, and but indifferently coloured. The contracted notions of Madame de Malet, the scruples of the queen, and the reverential feeling in my own breast as towards maidenly purity and reserve; all these offered serious impediments to regular artistic in-

struction; so that being restricted to the copying of draped figures (and these abundantly draped), the Princess remained, of necessity, wholly unacquainted with the structure of the human body.

"At length, weary of composing cleverly, and executing unskilfully, she became out of humour with her drawing; and one day she inquired of me 'whether I could not find something for her to do less dull and monotonous, and less like what other people did?' To say the truth, I was myself somewhat tired of having continually to correct her bad drawing of arms and legs, often distorted and out of all shape. I suggested then, to the Princess, the idea of trying her hand at modelling and sculpture; a branch of art wherein I was equally unpractised with herself, and which, therefore, offered to both of us the attraction of novelty. Our first essay was the small bas relief of Götz and Martin; very simply designed and executed with the imperfect skill of mere novices. This was a very encouraging beginning certainly; but it happened that on the day when the plaster cast of the clay model was sent home, M. Quinet's book of 'Ahasuerus' fell into the hands of the Princess, she began a group forthwith of 'Ahasuerus refused admittance within the abode of the angel Gabriel.' In this bas 'relief' was now disclosed the indubitable instinct of a sculptor, along with a perception of distances (by diversity of surface), and quite an original style of arranging the figures, there was joined so much of expression that the whole thing bore evidence of a true vocation for the art.

"From this moment, a passion for sculpture too deep hold of the Princess, and I must own that I felt scarcely less pleasure in giving her lessons in it. Whilst she was at work I sought out suitable subjects for her to execute; in the works of Quinet, then in those of Schiller (which were new to her, and later from those of Göethe). Her first choice fell upon 'Le reveil du Poëte,' from which she composed the

whole of a bas relief; my aid being rendered by drawing heads for her on paper. Viewed as an ideal piece of sculpture, and, furthermore, as a triumph over recognised difficulties, this performance must be regarded as something extraordinary in itself; but, as the production of a young girl, who was actually only at her third attempt in modelling, and who had read works of poetry and fiction, under the sober influence of *gouvernante* of strict piety, this work is truly surprising; the gradations of the ground plan, and the characteristic indications of the various personages introduced, being managed with singular and happy ingenuity.

"After completing this 'bas relief,' she modelled 'Joan of Arc on horseback,' of which the conception is entirely due to herself. The figure of 'Joan' has much merit, but in the manipulation of this model I gave the Princess a good deal of help.

"About this period the King had bespoken of Pradier,—our most approved artist in statuary—a monumental figure of Joan of Arc, for the museum of Versailles. Pradier chanced to be in no happy vein at the moment, and so produced a design which fell far short of the mark.

"The king not feeling satisfied with it, asked his daughter to try and invent another; she accepted the commission, after consulting with myself, but coupled her acceptance with this stipulation—that should her design be successful she should be intrusted with the execution of it in marble.

"She then set to work upon the modelling of her celebrated figure, 'Joan of Arc watching by her armour;' in attempting which, both the fair sculptor and myself found ourselves very deficient in the mechanical experience required. Instead of moulding the form in clay, we took it into our heads to model it in wax. It fell to pieces more than once; then it bent down at a third attempt; furthermore, living models were unattainable. For all this, the statue

finally came out the finest modern figure to be found at Versailles. Not alone does its impressive attitude, its simplicity, and its distinctive feminine character, contrast favourably with certain vulgar productions, among which it stands, but it carries upon itself the stamp both of the genius and the elevation of soul possessed by its author.

"The success which attended the appearance of this statue was prodigious. The most flattering applause was lavished upon it; yet I never saw flattery received with greater indifference than by this Princess. Though always manifesting more or less plainly her contempt for the 'official tribe' around her, she was as delighted as would be any child at the success of her work among the people; and, more than all, with the admiration bestowed on it by the soldiers.

"Succeeding to the above came—1. 'The Peri bearing the tears of the repentant sinner to the throne of grace.' 2. Angel at the gates of Heaven. 3. Abasuerus and Rachel. 4. Bust of her sister with her son. 5. Two small equestrian groups. 6. The Pilgrim, from Schiller. In each of these performances, and in some which followed, decided and progressive improvement was discernable. The occupation had, indeed, taken such hold upon her, that, unknown to her parents, she would actually sit up at night to pursue it. Her settled dream was to lead the life of an elevated, conscientious artist; and thus, to exercise a beneficial influence over high art in France. She chose for her studies, works calculated to ripen and develop her intellectual faculties—scientific treatises, imaginative works. Everything was read, and read with profit by her. All that seemed great, and worthy of admiration, she prized at its full value. Thus, on learning the sad end of Armand Currel, the tears rose to her eyes, notwithstanding that he was, and she knew him to be, perhaps the most formidable among the enemies of her house.

"In the heart of this Princess dwelt a religious feeling, such as became a noble womanly heart. Her pulmonary disease, which lasted several months—months of physical suffering—was borne with a resignation and courageous self-command, worthy of herself. She was aware, indeed, of the inevitable fate which hung over her, even before she took leave of her family, to go to her new home in Wurtemberg.

"A. S., 1839."

"O thank you, Mamma," exclaimed Laura, as her mother finished reading; "what an interesting account. Although a Princess, she is, as you say, an example to all, for steady perseverance. Yes," continued Laura, musingly, "she had great drawbacks—she could not have a regular artist's education, without which, it seems impossible to excel in drawing or modelling the figure; and yet, in one instance, at any rate, she was successful. However, I do not draw figures; and there is one great advantage for those who prefer landscapes, as I do, that there is nothing in the ground work, that a woman cannot go through. I wonder, Mamma, that women have not been more successful in landscapes."

"So do I, my dear."

"I mean, of course, Mamma, in oils."

"So I understood."

"After all, I think it is worth while knowing how to draw a little, even if one never attains great success, for it makes one enjoy other people's performances so much more."

"Well, I am glad, Laura, you see some reason for not giving up in despair all at once. I have given you instruction in music and drawing, because you might be so situated in after life as to find these accomplishments a resource and enjoyment. In a quiet country home, for instance, where there was not

much society or change of scene, they might be the means also of giving others as well as yourself great pleasure. I do not expect you to attain any wonderful proficiency in either; for my experience in life has shown me, that excellence in anything belongs to the few. Still your enjoyment of both arts may be the same. And I feel sure that the cultivation of them, while it refines the taste, has also a very beneficial effect on both heart and mind. We have been talking about one royal artist. I remember being much interested by an account of the manner in which the unfortunate Queen of Bohemia brought up her numerous family. Hurried about, as she was, from place to place, wretchedly poor at times, she yet contrived to make her daughters accomplished musicians, and very fair artists. The Princesses were the pupils of Honthorst; and in the days of their privations and humiliation, found painting the greatest resource. One of them retired in later life to a convent, that she might, it was said, indulge her taste of the fine arts, uninterruptedly."

"But now, Laura," added Mrs. Carteret, "I must talk no more, as I have some letters to write. I hope I shall find, when I come back, that you have overcome the dreadful difficulties of your foreground."





Kiole House.—Page 147.



CHAPTER IX.

KNOLE HOUSE—ITS HISTORY, POSSESSORS, ASSOCIATIONS—THE HALL AND DAIS—JAMES THE FIRST'S CHAIR, BEDROOM, AND SILVER FITTINGS—VENETIAN MIRRORS—PORTRAITS AND PAINTERS—EARL SURRIL—THE LEICESTER GALLERY—SIR WALTER RALEIGH—SIR KENELM DIGBY—AN EXPENSIVE BED—A CHINESE BOY.

ONE of the great pleasures the young Carterets promised themselves, and to which they had long looked forward, was a visit to the old manorial residence of Knole. A place that had passed from noble to episcopal, from episcopal to royal, from royal, finally, to ducal hands; a place which, if less grand than Warwick Castle, was more princely than Ham House, and as interesting from its relics of the past, its preservation and antiquity, as either of these two. They had often wandered through its delicious park, picking wild flowers in its shady woods, or admiring the deer in the long sweeping glades; and Laura had sketched the house in pencil and water colour; but they had never yet entered its old grey walls, or penetrated the mysteries of rooms unchanged since Elizabeth and James's days, where the high treasurer Buckhurst, with his two hundred servants and retainers, was yet shabby in his furniture, and reproved by his economical queen for not being more sumptuous in his house when he received the Cardinal Coligni; a fault he took care to avoid when he, as Chancellor of the University, entertained King James and his son Henry at Oxford; and when, probably,

the costly bed with its gold and silver tissue hangings, now preserved at Knole, and said to have cost £8000, was made. No; all the curiosities of Knole, and its pictures, had been scrupulously avoided, these young people reserving this, to them, who had seen so little, especial treat, for a time when they might share their gratification with their father. But Mr. Carteret was still detained in town by his business, and he was so uncertain when he might be able to join his family, that Mrs. Carteret decided to accept Mrs. Veryan's invitation to go over the house the next day with her family—consoling her daughters, who would have preferred waiting for their father, with the reflection that as their brother Hugh might like to see it also when he came from school, Mr. Carteret would doubtless wait for him, and they could all go over it together again then.

As the day was sultry, and Mrs. Carteret knew from experience that going over a house and looking at pictures was fatiguing, she sent for a carriage; and much did they all enjoy the drive over Fauke Common—one of the most charming bits of common land in England—and through the shady road which divides the Wilderness from Knole Park. When they arrived at the house, they found the Veryans had not yet come; so they had time to look well at its imposing front, in the Tudor style of architecture, with its castellated porch, a relic of an early style of building, when English homes were made for defence as well as for comfort, and which was entirely laid aside in Elizabeth's reign—when gable ends and twisted chimneys, with quaint devices and elaborate ornaments, bespoke a more settled state of society, and comfort and magnificence took the place of strength and durability.

An open carriage now drove up, and the whole Veryan family, including Mr. Veryan, who had arrived that morning, got out; Mr. Roberts and Miss Lane following in the pony carriage.

"Laura," said Edith to her young friend, "I advise you to listen to Papa, for he knows all about pictures—he is always buying them; and I know people think a great deal of what Papa likes."

Laura secretly resolved to follow this advice, but said nothing, because she thought Edith Veryan rather disposed to cry up everything that belonged to herself or family; so, rather seeking Miss Lane, she with the rest of the party entered the gate of the court—at one side of which was the porter's lodge, where a stand of arms, and a book for visitors' names, was all that claimed their attention. But the court itself, with its green sward, so velvety and fresh, in contrast to the sober hues of the building surrounding it, charmed all by its air of quiet stateliness and repose. The ivy that had climbed over the towers was trimmed and kept back, so as to adorn without overgrowing them; and the aspect of careful neatness seemed to announce that Time's destroying hand would not here be allowed to crumble the old walls or level the towers, but only give such touches as would soften the hard outline, or tone a harsh colour into mellowness and softness.

"Am I to be showman?" asked Mr. Robarts, in reply to a remark from some one—

"That this court was evidently not intended for carriages," the narrow flagged pavement leading from the gateway being unsuited for that.

All assented.

"No; it was not meant for carriages," said Mr. Robarts. "Archbishop Bouchier, who added this fine court to the house, kept great state here; but when he went out, it was on horseback, attended by a train of priests and gentlemen, and a large body of armed retainers. He lived and died here; and you see something of the man in this very building—the half-baronial, half-collegiate style of the architecture."

"Was he a very great archbishop?" inquired Jaño.

"Not great for ability and learning; but fitted by birth and bearing for his high position. He was the son of an English Countess and a Norman Count, the Count d' Ewe; and when the clergy elected him to the archbishopric, both the Court and the Pope, for once in a way, were satisfied. But he did one thing that shows he must have been an enlightened and a liberal man, at least for his age—one anxious to diffuse knowledge, and not to lock it up with monks and priests."

"What was that, Grand-papa?" said Edith.

"What do you think? Can you remember what was the great discovery of Edward the Fourth's reign? or, rather, I should say invention?—the most important invention ever made?"

Edith was silent.

Jane said, "Do you mean? can you mean—printing? I thought Caxton invented that?"

"I do mean printing, my dear, which was invented, not by Caxton, but by Guttenberg, at Haerlem; and Archbishop Bourchier, hearing about it, persuaded King Edward to send a trusty person over to Flanders to learn the secret, if possible, of this wonderful invention. He did more than this, too; for he provided a good part of the money necessary for the journey. The King sent one of his servants over with Caxton, who was a London merchant, and in that manner this great invention was brought to England, before it was known anywhere else but at Haerlem and at Mentz."

"I must say," said Mrs. Veryan, "that I look at this Court, with its old gray towers and gable ends, with their carvings and armoial devices—with still more pleasure, now I know what a good use their builder could make of his money."

* They had now reached the second Court, where Mr. Robarts made them remark the small loophole through which the warden in olden times surveyed visitors before admitting them.

"And now," said he, "we come to the great hall, where, in good old times, masters and servants ate together. Here is the dais, or raised place, where the gentle and noble sat; and here are the strong old tables still, which may have accommodated the inferior class below."

"It must have been cold work," said Laura, "dining here in winter?"

"Yes," said Mr. Veryan; "but then the ladies of those days were clad in warm strong stuffs, high up to the throat and down to the waist—and their coifs, or caps, were not airy things of lace or ribbon, but of thick velvet or silk."

"And then," said Jane, "their warm stockings of worsted or cloth! I remember Queen Elizabeth was the first person who had silk stockings—given to her by Lord Hunsdon."

Now an attendant appeared, who led them up a broad staircase into a long gallery, wainscotted and panelled in dark wood, and filled with portraits of celebrated people, most of them evidently painted at the same time, and by the same hand. Curiously old and odd-shaped chairs were ranged along the walls, and to one the attendant pointed, as being that in which James I. had sat when his portrait, which was hung in another room, was taken.

"How fond our ancestors seem to have been of these long galleries," remarked Mrs. Carteret.

"Yes," said Mr. Veryan; "one meets with them in most houses of the Tudor and Elizabethan period, rich in carving and plaster work; at first narrow and low, but gradually widening, until at last they assumed the proportions of noble rooms."

"What a capital place for a country dance!" said Edith Veryan.

"Can't you fancy," said Mr. Roberts, "the lady of the house leading a measure down this room, in her hoop and rich heavy dress, with a stiff ruff and high heeled shoes?"

"I thought Knole had belonged to the Archbishops of Canterbury," observed the accurate Jane.

"Very true," replied Mr. Robarts; "the Archbishop of Henry the Sixth's reign bought the house and manor of Knole from Lord Say, and paid 400 marks for it—about £800 of our money."

"What!" exclaimed a chorus of young voices; "only £800! for this magnificent place?"

"Four hundred marks, Archbishop Bouchier paid," replied the old clergyman. "But then remember that the house was not what it is now, the manor had not its present value; the park or chase about the house was probably small then—for its vast extent has been the growth of time; additions have been made by later owners."

"Well—the place remained the property of the See of Canterbury, until Henry the Eighth's reign, when Cranmer, alarmed at the church spoliation going on, thought it best to meet the storm half way, and by surrendering some portion of the archiepiscopal property, secure the rest. Thus Knole became a royal manor."

"Well, he was a wise man," said Mrs. Carteret; "but it must have cost something to one who has been called 'the rough rider,' to give up this place with its deer and deer park."

"He was little, if ever, resident here," replied Mr. Robarts; "Otford had been the favourite residence of the archbishops. But whilst we are talking, one must not forget to look. Observe this old dark stained floor;"—they had entered a bed-room with one of the huge lofty beds of state, still preserved in some old houses—"it is of oak, and black with age; and they have a story here, that it was laid before planes were used, which accounts for the roughness and inequalities of the boards."

"I should be glad to know," said Mr. Veryan, "how I could preserve my floors and wood work as well. It seems to me that in proportion as our work

grows neater it is less durable, in every branch of manufacture."

"And perhaps happily so," said Mrs. Carteret; "now that we have more workmen, we want more work; people imagined machinery would ruin the poor by saving labour, but having observed how much stronger all hand-made goods are, I have no doubt that matters are pretty nearly equalized, because if manufactured articles do not last so well, double the quantity must be required, made, and used, since the introduction of machinery than before."

Whilst in this room, the children's attention was attracted to a large and curious old mirror; the attendant present gave some little history of it, and ended her account by calling it a Venetian mirror.

"I suppose," said Laura, "that this curious but very unbecoming looking-glass came from Venice?"

"It may possibly have done so," answered Mr. Veryan, who was standing near her, "because Venice was long celebrated for her manufacture of glass; but a great many mirrors were made in England in Charles the Second's reign, at Lambeth, by Venetian workmen brought over by the Duke of Buckingham. And all glass mirrors were, from that circumstance, at that time called Venetian mirrors."

"You say, 'glass mirrors,' Papa; why? what other kind was there?" said Edith.

"Why, Edith! I hardly expected that question from you!" replied her father. "I thought you knew that burnished steel, and polished brass and silver, were used by the ancients as well as ourselves, before the application of glass to that purpose."

Edith coloured, and said, "I forgot—I ought to have remembered that."

"It must have been very tiresome," said Miss Lane, laughing, "to have to polish up your looking-glass every time you wanted to do your hair."

"The easiest plan," said her uncle, "would be to do, instead, what the song recommends :

'Keek into the draw-well, Janet, Janet,
There you'll see your bonnie sel', Janet, Janet.'"

"A more poetical than practical solution of the difficulty," said Mrs. Carteret.

"Not for reasonable people," replied the old gentleman, with much seriousness ; "but ladies now a-days want so much. I don't know what they did in Charles the Second's age, but I know my grandmother never had her head dressed more than once a week ; and so one looking-glass was enough for her whole family."

"How very horrid !" exclaimed the juvenile chorus.

"Well, it was rather horrid !" replied the old gentleman. "I remember hearing her say, that once, when she was going to a country ball, the hair-dresser came two days before to dress her hair, and she never went to bed, but slept in an upright arm chair, for fear of disarranging her head."

"Oh, what a price to pay for a ball ! and how thankful I am that our present fashion of hair dressing is more natural and cleanly !" exclaimed Mrs. Carteret. "But we are passing by, and neglecting all these curious old pictures."

"Yes," said Mr. Vryan ; "here is Philip II. of Spain, and one of his many Queens—stiff, dull, and dismal looking. Here is a Venetian Ambassador, whose bedroom we have just inspected. Here are a number of family portraits, interesting to the family, and those curious in costume ; but worthless as works of art. But here we have something better worth looking at : a Holbein, or a good copy of one—"

The attendant pronounced the picture in question to be, Earl Surrey, after Holbein.

"What a curious dress !" exclaimed little Ada.

The costume was that of Henry the Eighth's

reign: the short hose, jewelled cap and feather, and doublet, evidently embroidered in needlework, in a sort of heraldic pattern resembling fleur de lis.

"Earl Surrey," said Mrs. Carteret to her daughter; "was one of the best poets of his age; and was a brave soldier, a finished gentleman. His songs and sonnets may be read with pleasure even now; he introduced the English sonnet, and, with his cotemporary, Sir Thomas Wyatt, did a great deal towards refining the taste of the age in poetry. There are some touching and beautiful lines written by him during his imprisonment."

"How grave and serious he looks," remarked one of the party.

"Perhaps in anticipation of his death; for he died on the scaffold, a victim of the King's jealousy," replied another.

"Holbein," said Mr. Veryan, "was not an artist who flattered his sitters. Lord Surrey, painted by Vandyke, might have given us a different impression; but these hard lines, this want of blending in the shadows, that gives so much angularity to the outline, belonged to the painters of this early school. They were faithful copyists—they did not idealize; they painted what they saw with a wonderful and conscientious finish. But their portraits, accurate as they evidently are, have the faults and unpleasantness of photographs—they fail to catch the expression, the smile, or turn of the head, and attitude, which, after all, has more value than any detail, because they convey the character, the individuality, which gives life to the portrait."

"Very true," said Mrs. Carteret. "One feels, when one looks at the pictures of this early school, that there is no life, no reality about them; and yet there is immense merit about some of them."

"Of course there is," replied Mr. Veryan; "as colourists some of this school have not been surpassed.

I do not mean," he added, as he saw Laura look inquiringly at him—"I do not mean in the harmony and arrangement of their colours, but in the actual mode of working with colour. Their method, whatever it was, had the art of preserving their colour; for whilst some of our modern artists' pictures are rapidly fading, I have seen works by Holbein, his cotemporaries, and those before him, as fresh as the day they were painted. Not often in England, certainly, our climate, with its fog and damp, is unfavourable to the preservation of pictures; but in the lighter, drier, atmosphere of the Continent."

"I am going to find fault, Mrs. Carteret, with your criticism," said Mr. Robarts, "for saying there is no life or reality about Holbein's portraits. What do you say to his pictures of Henry VIII.? Don't we all feel as if we were perfectly acquainted with his Majesty? if he were to walk into this room, he would be received like an old friend. For my part I am not at all sure that I have not been in his company; I seem to know him so well—and all owing to Hans Holbein."

"Yes; but would you know him in any other dress? Don't you think it is the costume and figure, not the face and character of the features, that you feel to be so familiar with? I have often looked, but in vain, at Henry the Eighth's portraits, for the energy and decision of the Tudor race, and the talent attributed to him individually; and I confess, I never could discover much expression of any sort in his flat and somewhat heavy features. Strip him of his royal robes, his round cap and jewels, and he might do duty for any butcher or baker—there is nothing of the prince about him. Just contrast his portrait with those of Charles the First by Vandyke! How thoroughly and completely they convey to you the impression of the 'first gentleman in England.'"

"Oh! if you come to comparing the prince of

portrait painters with respectable Hans, I must give in," answered Mr. Robarts, laughing.

"Well, perhaps that is not fair," replied Mrs. Carteret; "only we started by saying, that excessive detail in portraiture did not necessarily convey the most truthful impression—and the two artists illustrate the case in point very well."

Mr. Veryan, meantime, was explaining to Laura and Miss Lane some of the peculiarities and excellencies of Holbein's style, pointing out the greenish hue and tone of his back grounds, and giving, as he was well competent to do, a rapid sketch of the state of art in his age; in this he was interrupted by Mrs. Carteret calling their attention to a picture at the other end of the room.

"Sir Kenelm Digby, by Vandyke," said the attendant.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Veryan, "I have seen better Vandykes than that."

"I dare say," exclaimed Mrs. Carteret; "still, there is a character and animation in that head, which, be it well or ill painted, carries its value with it. One would say, looking at that face, that was a clever, bold, adventurous spirit—not too refined, perchance, or—"

"Who was Sir Kenelm Digby, Mamma?" interrupted Ada.

"The son of Sir Everard Digby," answered Jane.

"And who was Sir Everard? What did he do?" persisted the little girl.

"He was one of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators, and died on the scaffold," said Jane again, strong in her English history.

"Yes, my dear," said Mr. Robarts; "and if you ask me what Sir Everard Digby did, I might say of him, what was once said of a distinguished man, that 'nothing became him in his life so much as his death.' Certainly he would never have been heard of but for his death. Sir Everard was an amiable, quiet man,

drawn into a plot from which his better nature revolted, but exciting admiration from the resigned and dignified way in which he met his death; his son, Sir Kenelm, however, was cast in another mould."

"He does not look very quiet, judging from his picture," said Edith Vivian.

"Nor was he," continued Mr. Robarts; "he was a strange, restless, inconsistent creature—unstable in everything: he was bred a Protestant, and became a Romanist; he was a royalist, devoted to Charles, even imprisoned for his opinions, and yet he appeared at Cromwell's court. He was everything by turns, and nothing long—a student, a soldier, a courtier, author, philosopher, and poet. The intimate friend, at one time, of Descartes. After giving himself up, at that period of his life, to pursuits of the highest intellectual order, he threw them over for such frivolous occupations as the invention of cosmetics for his wife's complexion—the celebrated beauty, Venetia Stanley, so often painted by Vandyke—and in a vain search after the philosopher's stone. He was one of those men who contrive to achieve a great reputation without doing anything really great."

"He did us one great service, at any rate," said Mr. Veryan.

"What was that?" inquired Laura.

"He introduced Vandyke to Charles the First; he showed a portrait of himself that Vandyke had painted to the King, and Charles, who was a thorough judge of art, instantly begged Sir Kenelm to send for his friend."

"How fortunate!" exclaimed Laura; "we might never have had Charles the First's pictures but for that!"

"Yes; we should have lost some splendid portraits, and Vandyke would have painted perhaps a few more such pictures as he has left behind in Flanders—a few more holy families and large compositions."

"I suppose he and Sir Kenelm were greater friends than ever after this?"

"Yes; Vandyke lived at Eltham in this country, and they were much together."

"Well, Laura, you and I, and Mr. Veryan, it seems, are left alone; the others are tired of our talk about pictures," said Mrs. Carteret. "We had better follow them."

They passed quickly through some old rooms, with nothing very interesting about them, and entered a light and cheerful apartment, containing several handsome pieces of furniture. But first amongst them—one of the large old four-posted beds of State, with its lofty canopy nearly touching the ceiling; the hangings were a sort of neutral colour, difficult to describe, having been once all that gold and silver tissue could be for brilliancy and richness. This bed, prepared for James the First by Lord Buckhurst, when Chancellor of Oxford, is said to have cost £8000.

"An expensive piece of furniture, certainly," said Mrs. Carteret, "but it has the merit of having lasted; the silver thread is black, and the gold is tarnished, it is true—but after all, what silk or damask made now would be hanging together more than two hundred years after?"

"Look, Edith," said her father, "at these small mirrors of polished silver. Glass, you see, was not used in James' reign; and, indeed, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, even drinking vessels for the table were so scarce and rare, as to be more highly valued than silver."

The fittings of this room were very costly; the candlesticks, lustres, vases, and even a table, being of solid silver, highly wrought.

"A royal visit," remarked Miss Lane, "must have been a royal road to ruin in those times!"

"Yes, indeed," answered her uncle. "But after all, it does not appear that James was ever at Knole; at least, as a State visitor."

"But then this bed and silver fittings?"

"Were probably prepared for the King when he visited Oxford, at the time that Lord Buckhurst was Chancellor of the University—when the Queen listened to the Greek oration with pleasure, because, she said, she had never heard Greek before, and when the poor King was worn out with all the speeches, and discourses, and Latin plays, prepared for him."

"I never see these great beds of State," remarked Mrs. Carteret, "without thinking of the Emperor Napoleon at Munich, who did not fancy sleeping in the vast bed prepared for him, but had his little camp bed brought in and put beside it."

"One can quite sympathize with him; but at the same time, his camp bed, which I have seen in the Museum at the Louvre at Paris, does not look very comfortable," said Mr. Veryan.

The attendant presently now opened a beautiful and elaborate wrought cabinet in the room, and took out three gill keys, the badge of the office of Chamberlain, held by members of the family; upon which Mr. Robarts remarked that—

"One of the duties of a Chamberlain formerly, was to sleep at the foot of the King's bed; a duty they had to perform until a comparatively recent period in France."

Mr. Veryan seeing Laura was interested in pictures, called her attention to one over the chimney-piece—the portraits of three brothers, Coligny; but they could not do more than glance cursorily at it, for the whole party had now left the room; they felt obliged to follow. A few steps more and they found themselves in a noble apartment, the Leicester Gallery; nothing but its length entitled it to the name of gallery; in width and height it excelled any room they had seen. About the centre of the room, in a recess, lighted by a large and handsome window, was a magnificent chest, elaborated and ornamented with brass work, made for Lord Buckhurst, when High

Treasurer of England ; and at the lower end, hung a portrait of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, in a suit of white—after whom the gallery was named ; and on one side of the room were copies of some of Raphael's cartoons.

" Ah ! " exclaimed Laura, as she looked at the latter, " how different from the originals which I have seen at Hampton Court ! "

" Yes, " replied Mr. Veryan ; " one feels no pleasure in looking at them. They are stiff and hard, and have none of the grace and ease of Raphael's drawing about them. We will run away and look at something else. "

They passed into a room full of portraits. Laura stopped before one, and said :

" White must have been fashionable in Queen Elizabeth's reign ; here is Sir Walter Raleigh, like Lord Leicester, in white. "

" Yes, " said her mother, who was behind her ; " and it must have been fashionable to be painted in a hat. Have you not remarked that, in every portrait we have seen of that age, a gentleman invariably wears his hat ? "

" I think, now you mention it, that it is most generally so, " said Mr. Veryan ; " but I can call to mind one celebrated man, at least, of that day, who was painted without his hat—I mean Shakespeare. "

" I dare say there are many others. But if you think of the prominent men of her day—Burghley, Salisbury, Leicester, Essex, and Raleigh—you will find they wore their hats when they sat for their portraits. "

" I suppose, " said Laura, " they were generally taken in their full or Court dress, and the hat was considered a finish ; but how much better than the dressing gown and night cap in vogue in later days. "

" So here you are, " said Miss Lane, who now joined them, " looking at that dreadful man, Sir Walter Raleigh. "

" Dreadful man ! What do you mean ? " cried Laura.

"Oh, he was the horrid man who introduced tobacco into this country! I should have done just what King James did—cut his head off for it!"

"Oh, Lucy!" said Jane, laughing; "how can you talk so? Poor Sir Walter! I always thought King James a wretch for beheading him!"

"Lucy," said her uncle, "can see no merit in him; she has such a horror of smoking. She thinks the 'Counterblast to Tobacco,' the pearl of books; and can't forgive Sir Walter."

"Not even for the sake of the potato, which he brought also?" asked Mrs. Carteret, smiling.

"Oh, no!" answered Mr. Roberts, "nothing will mollify her."

"I am afraid," said Mr. Veryan, "that Englishmen would have learnt to smoke without Sir Walter Raleigh's aid. It is at any rate an almost universal vice (if it is one), not confined to civilized nations only: for even where the tobacco plant is not found, the ingenuity of man has discovered a substitute. In Central Africa, where the poor natives were almost without the necessities of life, Captain Burton found them smoking the dried leaves of a plant indigenous to the country."

"I am sorry to hear it," said Miss Lane.

"Do you," said Mr. Roberts, interrupting them, "know an old song beginning—

'To all you ladies now on land,
We men at sea indite;
But first I'll have you understand,
How hard it is to write.'

Here is the portrait of the man who wrote it; the sixth Earl of Dorset, who, when forgotten as an earl, will be remembered by his verses. But now, if you want to see some good pictures, come into the next room."

The next room contained several fine pictures by our great English artist, Sir Joshua Reynolds. While

Mr. Veryan and the elder members of the party were occupied in looking at and criticising these, the younger ones were attracted to a portrait of a Chinese youth,—wondering how it came there, and greatly surprised to hear, that he had been educated at the Grammar School of Seven Oaks.

“Look, Mamma!” cried Ada, “at this picture of a Chinese boy! Is he not an ugly, odd looking fellow, with his strange dress?”

“I suppose,” replied her mother, “that he was brought over from China by Lord Amherst, when he was Ambassador there. But I see this portrait is painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. I dare say the first and only Chinese he ever painted.”

The little ones now asked a hundred questions about China, and the Chinese; but as they had been a long time going over the house, and Mrs. Carteret wished to be home early, she promised to gratify their curiosity later; and to give them some account of that strange country—to the capital of which, few English, but those connected with the embassies of Lords Macartney and Amherst, had yet penetrated.

“Good bye, you dear, dark, gloomy, grand, old house,” said the children as, passing once more through the two courts, they re-entered their carriages, and drove home to their early tea.





CHAPTER X.

A VISIT TO CHINA.

A DAY or two after the visit to Knole, when assembled for work and reading, in the large cool sitting-room of the farm, Mrs. Carteret said to her children :

“ You seemed so interested, my dears, when looking at Sir Joshua Reynold’s portrait of the Chinese youth—about his country, and its curious people—that I have made some extracts from an account of the first visit paid by Englishmen of any rank or note to Pekin, the Chinese capital, a town usually closed to foreigners and to which, hitherto, a few missionaries had alone obtained access; and I think you will be interested and amused by the description of the Emperor’s palace, and not unprofitably so, if this afternoon’s reading awakens in you a desire to learn more about, and become better acquainted with, the manners and customs of this ingenious people, between whom and this country, it is hoped, before long a better understanding and a more open intercourse, may be established. We have at this moment an ambassador, or envoy, in China, whose mission has, in the main, the same object as that of Lord Macartney’s, the first, and Lord Amherst’s, the second ambassador to Pekin, namely, to place our commerce with China on a secure and proper footing.

“ At the time of Lord Macartney’s embassy, we knew

little or nothing about the country; the Portuguese and Dutch, who have preceded us, like pioneers, in the East, had obtained settlements on the coast, and the former had made themselves agreeable to the government by assisting it to reduce a troublesome rebel. Difference of religion, and jealousy of English influence, made the Portuguese view our first adventurous settlers and traders in China, unfavourably; and it is most probable that the character they gave of the English to the Chinese, was anything but flattering, for the name of 'Hong-mow-zhin,' a sort of contemptuous epithet, meaning 'carrot-pated-race,' was long applied by the Chinese to our countrymen. English enterprise and energy, however, are not easily daunted by trifles, factories and merchants increased at Canton, and tea, which was at first a luxury, confined to the rich in England, gradually became a necessary of life, indispensable to all classes in Great Britain. The attention of the nation being drawn to this fact, it was felt to be important that the only country in the world that could supply the article should entertain friendly feelings towards us, and should understand our character and views. The impossibility of communicating with Peking by ordinary means, suggested the propriety of sending as an ambassador, a man of rank and influence, who should endeavour, by direct negotiation with the higher powers, to remove the difficulties which Chinese exclusiveness placed in the way of trade, and put our countrymen resident there on a footing worthy of a nation like our own. Lord Macartney, charged with this important mission, accompanied by a well chosen suite, arrived in China at the latter end of the year 1793.

"The exclusive policy of the Chinese government had rendered it hitherto difficult, if not dangerous, for foreigners to penetrate into the interior of the kingdom, but the embassy feeling themselves protected by the manner in which the Chinese government had enter-

tained the proposition of receiving them, and devoid of all fears for their personal safety, were enabled to note and enjoy the peculiarities and customs of this curious people; to wonder at their strange mixture of civilization and ignorance, of knowledge and prejudice; for the Chinese, though keen observers of natural phenomena, and accurate chroniclers for centuries, of all eclipses, and of any physical changes in the condition of their own country, were yet unacquainted with the form of our globe, believing it to be a flat surface, of which China occupied the central, and consequently the most favoured portion, 'the middle empire,' as they called it; and were unable to make use of their astronomical observations, or deduce from them any scientific results. On the other hand, they had advanced to such a state of civilization that scarcely an art or science known to these nations but was practised by them. Printing was early invented, by, or in use amongst them; as well as the manufacture of all sorts of stuffs, glass, paper, and useful articles; whilst in agriculture and floriculture they might have been our masters.

"As the fleet of small junks and barges carrying the Ambassador and his suite up the Peiho River, to Tien-tsin, the port of Peking, proceeded slowly along, they had full opportunity of seeing how industrious and economical the Chinese could be. Every available bit of ground was brought into cultivation. The crops were plentiful and well grown, and weeds seemed almost unknown—so carefully were the fields cleared and attended to. In a land so thickly populated, as this portion of the Celestial Empire, the husbandman's skill would necessarily be of the first importance; the country depending for supplies entirely upon its own resources. One of their institutions, the ancient ceremonial of the 'Venerable Agriculturists' becomes, therefore, very significant. It is thus described by Sir George Staunton:—

In a particular part of the city of Peking, "is raised

the Sien non-tang, or eminence of venerable agriculturists. Thither the Emperor repairs every Spring, and in compliance with ancient usages, goes through the ceremony of driving the plough, with his own hand, through a small field, by way of doing honour to the profession of the husbandman. After His Majesty has directed that instrument for an hour, a group of peasants chanting, at the same time, round him, hymns in praise of husbandry, the princes and great officers of state follow his example, and taking the plough by turns, cut several furrows in his presence.

"They are all, as well as the Emperor himself, clothed in the garb besiting their lowly occupation. The produce of the ground thus ploughed is carefully collected, and solemnly announced to surpass, in quality and quantity, what any other spot of the same dimensions has yielded in the year. The celebration of this exemplary festival, as it justly may be termed, is made known in the remotest village of the empire. It is meant to gratify even to the humblest cottager, and to be some consolation to him, in the disappointments which the vicissitudes of the season frequently occasion, when he recollects that his calling has been dignified in being adopted by his Sovereign—who is thus incorporated in the most numerous and useful class among his subjects, and seems to acquire a common interest with them.

"The attention thus paid to agriculture, and the absence of intercourse with other nations debarring them the use of foreign products, have caused the Chinese to observe narrowly and experiment freely upon the properties and uses of the vegetable kingdom. 'There is scarcely a plant growing in China of which the different uses in the economy of life have not been found out.'

"Thus, for example, they use the seeds of a species of fagara, by way of pepper. They extract an excellent oil from the kernels of the apricot in lieu of

olives; but for more common purposes, from the seeds of the sesamun, of hemp, of cotton, of turnip, of a species of mint, &c. There cannot be said to be a useless weed in China. They manufacture cloth from the fibres of a dead nettle; and paper from the bark of different vegetables—from the fibres of the hemp, and from the straw of rice. The cup of the acorn serves them to dye black; and the leaves of an ash are substituted for those of the mulberry in the rearing of silkworms.

“The entire absence of beggars was remarked in the towns and villages through which the embassy passed; but on the other hand the dwellings of the greater proportion of the people were poor and mean, being built of mud walls, or of dull-looking bricks. And as Chinese houses are seldom more than one story high, and those of the better classes built round a court, the outer wall facing the street, the general appearance therefore of some of the most populous cities was mean and wretched, unredeemed by the gilt and gaudy decorations of an occasional shop, or the elegant proportions of their temples and pagodas. The impression, however, conveyed to the minds of the persons composing the embassy was very favourable both to the country and people; the latter appeared, throughout their progress, quiet and inoffensive—and although vast crowds turned out, curious to view the ‘barbarians,’ no act of incivility or rudeness occurred. The officials were courteous, and seemed all animated by the same desire of making their English visitors content with their reception. A nearer acquaintance in more recent times with the Chinese has shown us, unhappily, that this apparently mild and amiable people, are cruel, treacherous, and capricious, and that that habitual courtesy which never under any circumstances deserts the true gentleman, is unknown to the Mandarin, who can exchange a polite and gracious manner, at a moment’s notice, for a coarse and insolent tone: and who is not

ashamed of acting with systematic duplicity towards those who have every right to expect good faith and honesty from him.

"All these defects, which Lord Amherst, twenty years after, had more than one proof of, did not now appear; so that external peculiarities of habit and manner were more dwelt upon than traits of character.

"The English were amused to see a horse mounted by a Chinaman, from his left; and a soldier's sword, with the point turned forwards, drawn from behind his back; white used for mourning, and black for a bride, &c. The naturalists and botanists to the expedition were busily engaged in their observations; and thus employed they reached Tien-Sing, or the heavenly spot, the port of Peking, a bustling, thriving place, situated at the confluence of the Peiho and Yellow Rivers; from this place their journey was continued over-land to Peking—a city so little known to Europeans as to excite the greatest interest and curiosity in those about to visit it. They found it walled round by a wall forty feet high, and twenty in thickness at the base—flanked with square towers, and with a deeply crenelated parapet. No cannon were seen on the walls; but loopholes for archers appeared in the merlons. The ramparts were wide enough for two or three horsemen to ride abreast, and the inside of the wall was upon a considerable bevel—the rows of bricks which form it being placed, like steps, one above and behind the other, such as are described to be the faces of the Egyptian pyramids."

"Peking," says Sir George Staunton, "exhibited on the entrance to it, a contrary appearance to that of European cities, in which the streets are often so narrow, and the houses so lofty. Here few of the houses were higher than one story, none more than two, while the width of the street was considerably above one hundred feet. It was airy, gay, and lightsome.

“The road was unpaved, and water was sprinkled over it to keep down the dust. The first street extended in a line directly to the westward, until it was interrupted by the eastern wall of the imperial palace, ‘called the yellow wall, from the colour of the small roof of varnished tiles with which the top of it is covered. Various public buildings seen at the same time, and considered as belonging to the Emperor, were covered in the same manner. Those roofs uninterrupted by chimneys, and indented in the sides and ridges into gentle curves, with an effect more pleasing than would be produced by long straight lines, were adorned with a variety of figures, the whole shining like gold under a brilliant sun, immediately caught the eye with an appearance of grandeur in that part of the building where it is not usually found. In front of most of the houses in this main street were shops painted and gilt. Over some of them were broad terraces covered with shrubs and flowers. Before the doors several lanterns were hung, of horn, muslin, silk, and paper, fixed to frames; in varying the form of which the Chinese seemed to have exercised their fancy to the utmost. Goods for sale were displayed outside as well as inside the shops.’

“Several circumstances, independent of the arrival of strangers, contributed to throng so wide a street. A procession was moving towards the gate, in which the white, or bridal colour, according to European ideas of the persons who formed it, seemed to announce a marriage ceremony; but the appearance of young men overwhelmed with grief showed it to be a funeral, much more indeed than the corpse itself, which was contained in a handsome square case shaded with a canopy, painted with gay and lively colours, and preceded by standards of variegated silks. Behind it were sedan chairs covered with white cloth, containing the female relations of the deceased; the white colour denoting, in China, the affliction of those

who wear it, is sedulously avoided by such as wish to manifest sentiments of a contrary kind. It is therefore never seen in the nuptial procession (met soon after), where the lady, as yet unseen by the bridegroom, is carried in a gilt and gaudy chair, hung round with festoons of artificial flowers, and followed by relations, attendants, and servants, bearing the paraphernalia, that being the only portion given with a daughter in marriage by her parents. The crowd was not a little increased by the mandarins of rank appearing, always with numerous attendants; and still more by circles of the populace, round auctioneers, venders of medicines, fortune-tellers, singers, jugglers, and story tellers, beguiling their hearers of a few of their chen or copper money. Among the stories presented at this moment to the imagination of the people, the arrival of the embassy was said to furnish no inconsiderable share. The presents brought to the Emperor were supposed to include whatever was rare in other countries, or not known before to the Chinese. Of the animals that were brought, it was gravely mentioned, that there was an elephant the size of a monkey, and fierce as a lion; and a cock that fed upon charcoal. The Chinese soldiers employed to keep the vast crowds collected in order, were furnished with long whips, but they used them mildly and only struck the ground.

“As the embassy proceeded through the city they observed that private houses were furnished with a wall or curtain, to prevent people seeing the interior of the court, into which the street door opened. This wall is called the ‘wall of respect.’ The Tartar women who mingled with the crowd, had not their feet cramped like the Chinese; but their shoes, with broad toes and soles, an inch thick, were as clumsy as those of the Chinese were diminutive. ‘Some of these Tartars were richly dressed, and their complexions heightened by the aid of art. A thick patch

of vermillion on the middle of the lower lip seemed a favourite mode of using paint. Some were seated in covered carriages; and a few of the Tartar ladies were on horseback, and rode astride like men.'

"When the Embassy reached a suburb, after passing through the city, they compared notes. The little they had seen of the city during the short time they had taken to traverse it, did not impress them very highly with the grandeur of the Chinese capital; except that part where the wall opening out had shown them a view of the Emperor's Palace. Here—'The ground was not level like the land without the walls, some of it was raised into hills of steep ascent. The earth taken for them left broad and deep hollows, now filled with water. Out of these artificial lakes, of which the margins were diversified and irregular, small islands rose, with a variety of fanciful edifices, interspersed with trees. On the hills of different heights the principal palaces for the Emperor were erected. The whole had somewhat the appearance of enchantment. On the summit of the highest eminences were lofty trees surrounding summer houses, and cabinets contrived for retreat and pleasure.'

"This was the Pekin Palace, or town residence of His Celestial Majesty; but at a little distance from the capital was the Autumnal, or, as some called it, the Summer Palace of the Emperors—in a villa close to which the English were to be lodged. Yuen-min-yuen, a place of luxurious elegance and varied beauty, now no longer exists; it has been razed to the ground, in testimony of the just displeasure of the French and English at the treachery and duplicity of its possessors.

"The hall of audience, or principal reception room, in this palace, is described as having a magnificent appearance outside. 'The approach to it was through three quadrangular courts, surrounded by buildings separated from each other. It was erected

upon a platform of granite, raised about four feet above the level of the Court before it. Its projecting roof was supported upon two rows of large wooden columns, the shafts of which were painted red and varnished; and the capitals ornamented with various scrolls and devises in vivid colouring—particularly with dragons, whose feet were armed with five claws each. Dragons may be marked on the edifices and furniture of the princes of the Emperor's Court, but with four claws only: the fifth is reserved for his Imperial Majesty only. A net of gilt wire, scarcely perceptible, is spread over the whole entablature of the building, to prevent birds from resting upon any of the projecting points, of which a great number are brought out in a regular order. The hall exceeds in length one hundred feet, is forty in breadth, and twenty in height.

“This spacious and lightsome hall was well calculated to display the presents (brought by the Embassy for the Emperor), nothing being left in it beside the throne, a few great jars of ancient porcelain, and a musical clock—playing twelve old English tunes, and made, as marked, in the beginning of the century by George Clarke, of Leadenhall Street, London.

• “The throne was placed in a recess; it was neither rich nor gaudy. Over it were the Chinese characters of glory and perfection. On each side were tripods, and vessels of incense. Before it was a small table, almost to be called an altar, with offerings of tea and fruit, to the spirit of the absent Emperor.

“In this hall the ceremony of the Koteou was performed, which seemed to be something more than a mere act of respect to a monarch; “for among the names belonging to his Imperial Majesty in his sovereign capacity, is one which not only coincides with that by which the Deity is sometimes known in China,—but the composition of the Chinese written character denoting both, and which always is supposed

to bear some allusion to the object intended to be conveyed—is the same precisely.’

“The ceremonial of the Koteou, or ‘advention,’ as the Chinese word expresses it, consists in nine solemn prostrations of the body—the forehead striking the floor each time. ‘It is difficult to imagine an exterior mark of more profound humility and submission, or one which implies a more intimate consciousness of the omnipotence of that being towards whom it is made.’

“As these prostrations were expected, from all admitted to the Emperor’s presence, the Ambassador was quite prepared for the suggestion made by the Mandarins to him—that he should practice this ceremony in order to be perfect in it, before his audience with the Emperor at his summer residence of Zhehol in Tartary. And they perhaps were not so unprepared as they expressed themselves to be, with his firm refusal to acquiesce in this humiliating custom. Numerous interviews, and much correspondence, on the subject took place. The Mandarins’ tone being—‘No Koteou, no audience.’ Lord Macartney’s—‘sorry, but cannot comply.’ Placards had been posted about Peking as the mission had passed through the city, describing them as ‘Ambassadors bearing tribute from the people of England.’ And Chinese vanity and pride seemed determined, if possible, to be gratified by something that would seem to confirm this absurd and false description. As neither party, however, appeared likely to yield, the object of this long, anxious, and expensive journey, threatened at one time to fall through. Lord Macartney, therefore, made the first move towards concession, by offering to go through the ceremony, provided a Chinese officer of equal rank performed the same before the portrait of his Britannic Majesty. Either this was impracticable, or the good sense of the Emperor prevailed; for the odious demand was withdrawn—and Lord Macartney was received with

every mark of respect and distinction by the Monarch in his summer retreat of Zhehol, in the mountains of Tartary. Here, in the 'seat of grateful coolness,' surrounded by pleasure grounds, styled the 'gardens of innumerable trees,' the Emperor, following Tartar usages and custom, received his guests in a large and handsome tent. A throne, similar to that described in the Hall of Audience at Yuen min-yuen, was placed at the upper end of the tent; and a smaller tent leading from it was furnished with a sofa, and other conveniences, for the Emperor, if he wished to retire.

"Lord Macartney did his best to mark his sense of the friendly spirit shown him, by complying strictly with Chinese etiquette in every respect—bearing the box containing the King's letter to the Emperor, between both hands high above his head, and bending on one knee when presenting it—and consulting Chinese prejudices as to costume, by wearing his mantle as Knight of the Bath. Any dress concealing the figure being considered more decent in China than our European tight fitting clothes.

"After the reception, came a banquet; a table being placed for every two guests, heaped up with bowls of different viands. It is seldom that more than four people eat at one table in China. The Emperor was full of attentions to his guests, and presented to them 'with his own hands, a goblet of warm Chinese wine, not unlike Madeira of an inferior quality.'

"Early the following morning they were invited to see the gardens, or pleasure grounds, of Zhehol. This was a very agreeable proposition to them, as the well known skill of Chinese gardeners, and their ingenuity in dwarfing trees and shrubs, (so that miniature oaks and elms, with every appearance of age and decay, yet not exceeding two or three feet in height, might be seen in the mandarins' houses); and also their success in increasing the size, beauty, and

fragrance of garden flowers, led them to expect much pleasure in this visit.

“These grounds, occupying a space of about five miles in circumference, bore more resemblance, however, to some of our spacious parks and shrubberies, than to what we call a garden; the object seemed to be to introduce, as much as possible, within a small compass, all that renders natural scenery attractive. Flat as a great portion of his country is, the Chinaman is not, like the Dutchman, an admirer of straight lines, and regular walks; he loves an undulating and hilly ground, and avoids as much as possible all appearance of artifice in his landscape gardening. At Zhehol, no gravel walks or roads were to be seen. Passing through a valley, ornamented with large trees, they arrived at an ‘extensive lake, of irregular form, and sailed upon it till the yachts in which they had embarked were interrupted by a bridge thrown over it, in the narrowest part, beyond which the lake seemed to lose itself in distance and obscurity.’

“The party stopped at a number of small palaces near the water’s edge—no one edifice being very considerable. There were other buildings erected on the pinnacles of the highest hills; and some buried in the dark recesses of the deepest valleys. They differed in construction and ornament from each other, almost every one having something in the plan of it analogous to the situation and surrounding objects; but within each was generally a public hall and throne, with a few side rooms; the whole furnished with works of art from Europe, and rare or curious productions of nature found in Tartary.

“The objects most worthy of remark in art, were the wood carvings. We have abundant specimens in this country of the wonderful skill of the Chinese in carving; with no better instrument than a pen-knife, and no better material than a peach or plum stone, he will produce a little bijou; and the delicacy and fineness of his work in ivory is unsurpassed; but the

grotesque and fanciful is more pleasing to him than the beautiful. Of high art the Chinese have not the smallest idea. Their pictures, carefully finished and rich in colour, are destitute of the beautiful effects of light and shade, and as innocent of perspective and drawing as the illuminations and missals of olden days. Queen Elizabeth, who desired her portraits to be painted without shadow, would have delighted in a Chinese artist; but perhaps no other European would consider their productions otherwise than as pretty curiosities.

“Leaving these small palaces, scenes of a most varied kind were traversed; plains, bearing oaks, and the hardy shrubs of a northern climate—and soft glades planted with the delicate and tender natives of a southern land. Quadrupeds and birds were met with, here and there; and in a large clear pond, the bottom of which was studded ‘with pebbles of agate, and jasper, and other precious stones,’ some huge varieties of gold and silver fish were seen swimming about.

“A portion of the grounds was carefully walled off for the exclusive use of the ladies of the Court; and in it, it is said, were erected models of a town in miniature, for the amusement of the fair recluses.

• “As the country round Zhehol was bare and wild, and the town itself miserable in the extreme, much trouble and money must have been expended on these grounds to make them what they were. But after all, both in extent and beauty, they were inferior to those of Yuen-min-yuen. Those gardens, twelve miles in circumference, seem to combine all that is charming and agreeable; except, perhaps, what we English most admire—the trim and smooth shorn lawn:’ this is not to be met with. But in the art of opening out views, and giving an effect of distance to them, the Chinese are very clever; ‘intricacy and concealment’ is their forte. ‘At Yuen-min-yuen a slight wall was made to convey the idea of a

magnificent building, when seen at a certain distance through the branches of a thicket; and sheets of made water were hemmed in by artificial rocks that seemed indigenous to the soil.'

"A few days after their audience, the Emperor gave the Ambassador an entertainment of music and ballet dancing, terminated by fireworks—which, even during daylight, when this took place, were very striking. Some of the contrivances were new to the English:—'Out of a large box, among other instances, lifted up to a great height, and the bottom falling out, as it were by accident, came down a multitude of paper lanterns, folded flat as they issued from the box, but unfolding themselves from one another by degrees. As each lantern assumed a regular form, a light was suddenly perceived, of a beautifully coloured flame, burning brightly within it; leaving doubtful by what delusion of the sight those lanterns appeared—or by what property of combustible materials they became thus lighted, without any communication from the outside to produce the flame within.' This devolution and development were several times repeated, on each occasion with a difference of colour, which the Chinese seem to have the art of communicating to fire at pleasure. On each side of the large box was a correspondence of smaller boxes, which opened in like manner, and let down a kind of network of fire; with divisions of various forms, which shone like burnished copper and flashed like lightning with every impulse of the wind: the whole ended with a volcano or eruption of artificial fire.'

"The festivities over, and the presents given and received, the Embassy returned to Peking, passing once more by the great and ancient wall that divided Tartary from China before the two kingdoms were united, and which had excited their most eager curiosity. Those of my young readers who have felt any interest in bricks, may be curious to know that the wall is built of bricks of a bluish colour,

which are considered, from experiments made upon them, to have been burnt or baked in a kiln. They have stood the wear and tear of more than two thousand years, and now remain a sort of landmark in the history of the two countries they once divided.

“ Lord Macartney returned to Peking. Nothing could be more satisfactory than the whole affair had been. The Emperor had greatly noticed a youth of twelve, who, twenty years later, accompanied Lord Amherst's expedition, as his father, Sir George Staunton had that of Lord Macartney, and by his firmness prevented the second attempt of the Chinese to force the odious and degrading ceremonial of the Koteou upon our representative. He, Sir George Staunton the younger, in his notes upon the Embassy, printed for private circulation among his friends, gives a long account of the annoyance and vexations to which Lord Amherst was subjected. A very different feeling towards the English, apparently animated the sovereign then reigning; and this feeling gave the tone to the officials, who behaved alternately with obsequious politeness and the coarsest insolence.

“ In spite of Lord Amherst's steady refusal to perform the Koteou, the Embassy was allowed to proceed to Peking—taken even to the Palace of Yuen-min-yuen, and then told that the Emperor would see them at once. In their dusty travelling dresses, worn out by fatigue, and unprepared for the interview—having been taken to the Palace by a circuitous road outside the town, and led to believe, but the moment before, that they were at some distance from it—they requested to be allowed to defer their audience to the next day—until the Ambassador should be prepared with the royal letter and insignia of office.

“ At this reasonable request the Emperor affected to be highly incensed, refused to receive them at all, and sent a military officer next day to warn them to depart instantly. They had no choice but to obey; and were compelled to travel all night on rough roads

outside the walls of Peking, barely allowed time for refreshment, and made to feel, that the sooner they re-embarked on board their own vessels the better. And being in palanquins, entirely at the mercy of the Chinese bearers, they felt that any moment any one of them might be separated from their party, without the others being even aware of it. Their position was at once anxious, humiliating, and uncomfortable. It was some comfort to find themselves once more safe on board their own vessels.

"The third mission to Peking was a still greater failure; Mr. Bruce not even reaching the Imperial City. The fourth is hardly yet matter for history. Lord Elgin, England's last Envoy to the Celestial Empire, was accompanied by an escort of 10,000 troops; but the Sovereign, as the Envoy entered the city at one gate, retreated to his palace in Tartary through another; and all that has since taken place in China is hardly likely to reanimate the friendly feelings shown to Lord Macartney.

"I forbear to discuss here how far we are justified in forcing a commercial intercourse on a nation who desire it not. Should the intercourse which we are anxious for be established on the desired footing, the Chinese people will in the end be the greater gainers. Knowledge of the world and free communication with other nations will break down by degrees the barriers of prejudice and ignorance, which have hitherto neutralized the effects of their civilization, and made them of so little account in the great family of nations.

"In a religious point of view, we may humbly trust a free and unreserved intercourse with Christian nations will hasten the work of conversion begun by the missionaries—until the grain of mustard seed already planted shall become a wide spreading tree; beneath which the divers peoples and religions composing their Empire shall seek and find one common shelter."



CHAPTER XL

A WALK THROUGH THE PARK—OLD BESS—THE DEER, SOMETHING ABOUT THEM—THE BEECHES—BAVARIAN WOOD—THE OLD OAK—A LITTLE ADVENTURE AND PLEASANT SURPRISE—SOMETHING ABOUT SQUIRRELS—THE CHESTNUT AVENUE—THE CHILDREN'S WREATH—JANE'S TRIAL.

"Who's for a walk—a tremendously long walk?" cried Edgar Vervan, as he and his mother and sisters made their appearance, one fine day, in Mrs. Carteret's sitting-room.

"I'm your man," said Charles, jumping up from his seat.

"Well, that's one able-bodied recruit, at any rate," said Mr. Roberts, laughing. "But no more volunteers?"

"Oh dear, yes; we will all go," exclaimed the little girls, "if Mamma will allow us."

"Certainly," replied their mother. "Where are you going to, Edgar?"

"Oh, Grandpapa is going to take us all round the park—in at one gate and out at the other; and we have got the pony chaise, and the carriage here, to drive there, so you will not be tired. We are going to look at the Old Oak, and the King Beech, and come back by the Chestnut Avenue; and then we can drive to One Tree field to see the view."

"A very pleasant plan; but I do not think the two little girls, Mary and Ada, can quite manage it," answered Mrs. Carteret.

"No," said Mrs. Veryan; "I was going to ask you to let Ada spend her afternoon with me and Mary."

"Oh no, Mamma," said Edith, hastily; "you must go with us. Do go with us!"

"Edith, some one must stay with Mary."

"Should you be afraid to trust her here with Ada? one of the maids would look after them," asked Mrs. Carteret.

"Not at all; that would be a nice plan for both."

"Then let it be so."

Mrs. Carteret sent for her maid, and giving her strict injunctions not to lose sight of the two children, but to take her work out of doors, if they wished to play on the lawn; she ordered tea to be ready for the whole party, on their return, and then went to prepare for the walk.

Edgar Veryan drove Mrs. Carteret and Laura in his Grandfather's pony-chaise; the rest of the party packed as well as they could into the Rector's old-fashioned roomy open carriage.

Edgar seemed bent upon getting something like a pace out of his Grandfather's fat, petted, and lazy pony. At first, Bess gave in to him, and kept up a very respectable speed. Edgar was triumphant.

"You see, Mrs. Carteret; you see, Laura, that Bess wants nothing but good driving. If I had the management of her for a month or two, I'd make a different animal of her. I wish you could see Mamma's ponies at home, they never want the whip—the same steady pace for miles; but Bess, you wretch, what's the meaning of this? There is no hill here! Grandpapa walks her up every hill, until she is always fancying that she is coming to one."

Bess had come to a stand-still, and could not be induced to forsake her ordinary pace, which was little more than a walk. The heat of the weather, and the exertion she had just made, she evidently thought too much for

her. She seemed insensible to the whip, and deaf to sounds of encouragement. Edgar was greatly mortified. He threatened all sorts of extreme measures; and, at last, took to shouting at her, much as people do to an obdurate donkey. Bess, apparently insulted at this, came to a full stop, and entirely declined proceeding. Mrs. Carteret and Laura were in fits of laughter.

"You obstinate brute," cried Edgar. "Mrs. Carteret, please just hold the reins. I'll get out and ——"

What he meant to do was lost to them; for he had no sooner alighted, than Bess, as if conscious that her enemy was gone, set off at full speed; and in spite of all Mrs. Carteret's efforts to check her, never stopped until she reached the park gates.

Edgar was picked up by the party in the carriage; and his Grandfather was greatly amused, to hear that Bess had got the upper hand of him, as she did of any one.

"Thou art a perverse animal," said the old gentleman, as he patted her side, on rejoining Mrs. Carteret; "but hast thy good parts—dost not shy, bite, art sure footed and faithful, and so we must give in to thy whims and caprices, in consideration of thine exemption from pony tricks."

A man and boy were waiting to take the carriages, and the whole party entered the park gates, and found themselves on a good carriage road, winding through a beautiful wood, the shade of which was very grateful and refreshing, after the sun and heat of the open road.

"These woods are charming in the spring, literally carpeted with wild flowers—the wild hyacinth or blue bell, the wood anemone, and such like," observed Mr. Roberts.

"The primrose, of course," said Mrs. Carteret.

After walking some time along this lovely road, they came to a gate, and passing through it, found them-

selves on rising ground, looking down upon one of these long sweeping glades, with banks softly swelling up to belts of magnificent trees, for which Knole Park is justly celebrated, the evening shadows were just beginning to lengthen out, and gave to the green sward that rich velvety appearance, which no pen or pencil can ever adequately render. To add to the beauty of the scene, a herd of deer were feeding close by, in every variety of group and posture. There were old bucks, with magnificent antlers, both of the spotted or dapple deer, and of the handsome dark brown variety; there were their does and young fawns, easily startled, and bounding about; and the pricket, or two year old buck, just beginning to show the horns.

"A scene like this," observed Mrs. Vernon, "with those splendid forest trees, and these beautiful deer, always brings Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' to my mind, with the 'melancholy Jaques,' and his soliloquies."

Her daughters understood this allusion, for their father not unfrequently read one of Shakespeare's plays to them; but Edgar Vervan seemed to think the conversation getting rather deep, so he proposed a race to Charles, and off the two boys ran, down the hill, almost as fleet as the deer, who, frightened at them, started off, led by a fine old buck, to the shelter of the woods, leaving the glade to the possession of the two noisy, happy boys.

"Oh, how sorry I am the deer are gone. I wanted to look at them a little closer."

"You will see plenty more," said Mr. Roberts; "there are several hundred head of deer in this park."

"I suppose they are all fallow deer?" said his daughter.

"I believe so; there are few parks now where there are any other varieties. I think it was at Raby, I remember once seeing some of the common stag, or red deer."

"What! the same as in Scotland?" inquired Jane.

"Yes, my dear; but, perhaps, you do not know that the red deer was one time wild and very common in England."

"I did not remember it."

"Yes; it was hunted by our early Norman kings, in their forests and chases; and was, as you may remember, very strictly preserved. You all know how bold Robin Hood lived on the King's deer?"

"Oh yes; and, I suppose, it was hunting this deer that cost William Rufus his life?"

"Most probably; but the roebuck, a much smaller kind, was common then in England and Wales also. It is now only found in Scotland. You know the song—

‘Hunting the wild deer,
And following the roe,
My heart’s in the Highlands,
Wherever I go.’”

"But how is it," asked Jane, "that we have none in England now?"

"Because, my child, we have no deer at all in England now, in a wild state. When the Royal forests and chases were disparked, cleared out, built upon, and brought into cultivation, the red deer and roe, who are very shy of man, retreated to the wilder districts of the north; and even now, in Scotland, would disappear, but for the care taken by those who wish to preserve them, in keeping large districts of country in a wild, uncultivated state. Then the fallow deer, which some people say were introduced by James I. into England and Scotland, were found to be so much more easily preserved and domesticated in our parks, that I suppose we became satisfied with them as a substitute."

"Then the deer that Shakespeare stole was not one of those pretty creatures?" said Laura.

"If he stole a deer at all, which many doubt, it might have been one of the other two, for the roebuck and red deer had not disappeared from England in Elizabeth's reign; and of these two, I should incline to the roe, as being smaller and more easily carried off, and being considered more delicate eating than the common stag. But, at the same time, it is not satisfactorily made out that we were without fallow deer until James the First's reign; and tradition has always pointed to a fallow deer as that which Shakespeare carried off."

"Here they come again," said Edith; "what a curious appearance the horns of the young deer have. Just like large buds on their heads, so round and smooth."

"Yes," said her grandfather; "and they are as tender and pliable at present, as a bud, and provided with a soft velvety covering, just as some buds are with an outer husk to guard them against injury during the early growth; but here we are at the Duchess' walk."

This was a long straight road, between an avenue of fine old trees, leading up to the Home Farm, from the spot where they stood.

"Shall we sit down a few minutes," said Mrs. Carteret, "upon these felled trees, in the shade? We can enjoy this pretty bit of ground before us; and you, Laura, can study the deer, who seem coming in front on purpose to be admired."

"I see," said Edith, "almost all the young deer have that sort of covering over the horns; and, when the horn is of any size, it looks awkward and clumsy."

"Look at this fellow near us," said Mr. Robarts; "don't you see that there is a little bit of the skin, or covering only, left hanging to his antler, all the rest has been rubbed off."

„Rubbed off," said Jane.

„Yes; when the horn, having become long and

hard, no longer requires protection, this skin dries, shrinks up, and peels off; and the deer, as if he felt it an incumbrance will go and rub his head against the trees, in order to get rid of it more quickly."

"How very curious," said Laura; "but deer change their horns, do they not?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Roberts; "every spring the old horn comes off, and the new one is reproduced. The growth is very rapid; in fact the whole process of the formation of the antlers is very interesting. It would take me too long to do more than describe it very superficially to you; but really, we have before us now, almost every stage illustrated. There is a young buck, about two years old, with the first single shaft, appearing, which is a continuation or development of the outer table of the skull, just as the covering is a continuation of the skin of the head, with its blood vessels and nerves, and so on. Well, after some little time, at the base of the horn, comes a circular bony formation, called the burr, or pearl. As this grows outwardly larger, it presses, of course, upon this velvet covering of the horns; and thus, first contracts the blood vessels, and then, at last, entirely stops the circulation in it; and then, Edith, when circulation ceases in the human frame, what must cease also?"

"Life, I suppose, Grandpapa."

"Exactly so; the burr, by spreading out, has cut off the connection between the body and this appendage to it. Life then ceases; the skin dies—dries up, and come off—but Nature has arranged it so beautifully—timed it so well, that this does not happen until the horn has become firm enough to be exposed."

Next spring that young deer will cast off these horns, and in their place will come new ones, divided into two antlers, as we call it; the following, or third, year the antlers are merged into a broad flat form,

called a palm, like yonder dappled beauty; and in the fourth or fifth year, this palm is notched, or dentelated, as you see in so many of the deer now before us; and after that there is no sort of regularity in the shape at all."

The two boys now returned from their race.

"What! no further than this?" cried Hugh;
"You'll never get home to-night, at this rate."

"We have been hearing a great deal about the deers' horns," said Jane.

"Oh, horns; I can tell you about horns," cried Hugh. "I can tell the age of a buck by his horns. I learnt that from Tom Crosse—Uncle Richard's keeper."

"And you could learn a great deal more about them still, than he could teach you, I daresay," said his Grandfather. "I daresay, he didn't tell you that the deer of northern climates have broad spreading antlers, to help them to lift off the snow from their food, and so on; nor, perhaps, could he explain to you how wonderful a combination of strength and lightness the frame of the deer is."

"No, Grandpa; but Tom Crosse knows a deal more than you think he does; and I could tell you, I daresay, something about these fallow deer here, that you don't know; but I want the girls to come down to the beeches, and see the squirrels. We nearly had one fellow, we came upon him so quietly; but he saw us, and was up the tree in a twinkling."

"What a magnificent tree," exclaimed Laura, as a few steps more brought her to the commencement of the beech wood, where one of these forest children stood apart from the rest, displaying to advantage its smooth, round silvery trunk, which divided and subdivided itself into endless stems and branches, the deep shadows and strong lights of a late afternoon sun, playing upon it with charming effect. "After all, there is no tree like the beech for an artist, whatever the carpenter and builder may say."



The King Beech.—Page 188.

"But I don't think the carpenter despises the beech," said her mother.

"I thought beechwood was comparatively worthless, and that was the reason we had so many fine trees of it left."

"As compared with the oak, pine, and trees used for building purposes, it is not so valuable; but still the wood is useful for many purposes—for tools and tool-handles. The laminae, or scales of the beech, are used for band-boxes, covered with paper; and frequently for book-covers. And the wood has this peculiarity, that it is more durable when always moist or wet, than when dry; and so is employed for the keels of ships, and the bottoms of locks, and such purposes."

"It is a very hard, tough wood, but too brittle, when dry," added Mr. Roberts.

"Yes," said Mrs. Carteret; "it is very hard to saw through, but splits up directly with a cleaver, or a wedge driven into it. I have often watched the people cutting up the wood, for fires, in the streets of Munich."

"In the streets, Mamma, how odd!"

"Yes; you order your wood, and it is brought either into the court-yard, or street opposite the house; and then a couple of men come, who saw the long pieces shorter, and then cleave them again into small convenient sizes, and carry the whole up to your apartment, in a sort of little crate, or basket, on the back. When the wood is thoroughly dry, it is very brittle, and splits directly; and, of course, is excellent fuel."

"But a poor substitute for coal, after all, I should think," said Mrs. Veryan.

"One misses the cheerful blaze of our coal fires; but a well-built porcelain stove, heated with wood, warms a room far more thoroughly, than any open fire. So you can imagine, Laura, how valuable the beech is there, in a country like Bavaria, where the cold is very severe.

"I can, indeed; they must use a great deal of it there. I suppose you would hardly see such a monster as this, Mamma, in Bavaria, he would have been cut up for firewood, long ago."

They stood before a beech of enormous girth, the lower branches being as massive as the trunks of many of the trees near. It was well named the King Beech—it was truly grand in its proportions.

"I shall not leave the Farm happy, unless I take a sketch of this splendid old monster with me," exclaimed Laura. "I shall read up Harding on Beeches, that I may do him justice. Confess, Mamma, that you never saw any German equal to this fine old English gentleman."

"Well," said her mother, smiling at her enthusiasm; "I am willing to confess, I never saw a finer specimen anywhere."

"I thought not," said Mr. Robarts, rather triumphantly to Laura, for he felt the pride of a neighbour, in the park and its celebrities.

"But," continued Mrs. Carteret, "I have seen no more beautiful forest scenery anywhere, than in some of the vast Bavarian woods, which are principally of beech and pine. Sometimes you come upon a track, which has been cleared, with only a few trees left in groups, or singly, that has all the beautiful features of an English park, with wild flowers of the most brilliant hues colouring the grass. In spring, gentians, orchises, and a hundred others. And then you have fine dark gloomy bits of dense wood, or little openings—sunny spots, where wild strawberries ripen in profusion; or damp shady corners, sweet with lilies of the valley."

"Oh, that must be delicious, Mamma," said Jane.

"It is delicious. You may wander for miles, meet no one, hear no sound but the wood-cutter's axe, but sometimes come unexpectedly upon a forester's cottage, a much more important calling there than here, and

followed by people of education, who rise through various grades. On Sunday, when even the axe is still, the silence of these woods becomes quite solemn. We passed one summer close to one, and used to take our books, and sit there, and feel as if we were in a Cathedral, or on hallowed ground. I then learnt to understand and appreciate the feeling of those who erected the little wood chapels in these solitudes."

"Wood chapels—what are they?" inquired Edith.

"Small chapels, which some pious people erect in lonely places in the forests; they are little more than covered altars, with an image of the Saint, generally St. Hubert, to whom they are dedicated, and a few simple offerings from passing votaries. Once a year, perhaps, there may be a pilgrimage from the neighbouring village or town, on the anniversary of the Saint's day; but, on ordinary days, it is only the jäger, or keeper, the forester, and the chance passer-by, who stop to offer up a prayer there."

"What a pity," said Mr. Robarts, gravely, "that where there is so much devotional feeling it should be so misdirected."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Carteret; "zeal, faith, and superstition grow there together, like 'wheat and tares;' and it seems impossible at present to disturb one without rooting up the other."

Edgar and Charles, meantime, had been vainly looking out for more squirrels; but these shy animals discreetly kept out of sight; and as they approached a more frequented part of the park, they gave up their search for a time.

Mr. Robarts now led his party a little off the path, into the wood, to show them the Lion of the park—the Old Oak, generally supposed to be six hundred years old. It is nothing more than a shell now, and but for its sheltered position, surrounded by strong and healthy trees, would scarcely resist a gale of wind. A few branches, towards the summit,

still put forth leaves every year, showing how long life lingers with these monarchs of the woods, even when heart and bulk have perished. The whole party joined hands to see if they could span the trunk, which measures some five and thirty feet in circumference.

"I will show you, by and bye," said Mr. Robarts, "another oak, nearly as large, although not quite so old, both probably stood alone in their prime, though they are now surrounded by trees."

"Why do you think they stood alone, Grandpapa?" said Edgar.

"Because they have neither of them attained any great height. Oaks, detached from other trees, spread out their branches at no great distance from the ground, and the trunk increases in circumference with age; but when planted together, they run up to a greater height, before they throw out their long arms, and the trunk seldom, in these cases, obtains any extraordinary size."

"Do you think this tree can be so old as they say?" asked Edith.

"I see no reason to doubt it, my dear," replied her Grandfather. "There are several oaks still existing in Great Britain, of as great, or greater age. The oak will live three or four hundred years, before it begins to decay at the core, and how long after that, I can hardly say."

"I like the oak," said Jane, "because it is so thoroughly an English tree."

"It has always been of value to us, from the days of the Druids, downwards," said her mother.

"At one time," said Mr. Robarts, "the acorns were the most valuable part of the oak."

"Yes, I remember," said Jane, "that one of the great complaints of the English against the Normans, was their enclosure of the forests for hunting, so that the poor people could not get acorns for their swine to feed upon."



View in Knole Park.—Sevenoaks Church in the Distance.—*Page 193.*

"After all," resumed Mr. Robarts, "the age of our slowest growing, and consequently longest lived trees, such as the yew, cedar, oak, &c., are nothing compared to certain trees in the East, which are counted by thousands of years, instead of hundreds."

"Is that credible?" exclaimed Laura.

"Such trees have their histories and records, which well-informed men seem inclined to credit; however, I will send your mother two books, containing some account of two remarkable trees, one in Ceylon, the other in the Chinese Empire, if you feel any curiosity to know more, you can read them. How well the old house looks from this point of view! What a town of roofs and gable ends there seems to be!"

They were passing now in front of the house, and taking a slanting direction, reached a broad open space of ground, with the garden wall and west front of the mansion to their left, and the beautiful glade, more than a mile in length, terminated by the Mount, on their right. The ground upon which they stood was high, their homeward route was through the woods in front of them; and close by was a bank covered with large handsome ferns. Just before entering these shady depths they turned round to look at the church and town of Seven Oaks, with the distant hills behind.

The evening glow heightened the beauty of the landscape, and they stood watching the changing effects of the light and shade upon the hills, when a stone, or some hard substance, was thrown into the midst of the party.

"What was that?" said Mrs. Veryan, turning round to her son, as if he, or Charles, must have done it.

"It was not I, Mamma," said Edgar.

"Nor I, Ma'am," added Charles.

"Then, who could it be? I see no one near."

Just as she spoke another missile fell, which, on being picked up, was found to be a horse-chestnut.

"There must be some rude boy hidden amongst the trees," said Mrs. Carteret. "We had better walk on."

"Edgar ran on to look for the offender; but the party had no sooner turned round to resume their road, than a perfect shower of chestnuts fell at their backs.

"This is too bad," exclaimed Mr. Robarts, angrily.

"There must be some one hidden amongst these ferns," cried Charles, as he ran boldly up to them, and called out: "I say, come out of that—whoever you are, or I'll make you."

"Charles, Charles," cried his mother anxiously, "you had better come on, you will only get into some quarrel."

"No, no; not before I have the fellow out. I'd like to know what he means by pelting ladies."

"That's right, Charlie, my boy," said a well-known voice from among the ferns; "always defend the fair sex."

"Papa, I declare," exclaimed the boy joyously. "Oh Mamma, it's Papa—it is, indeed."

Mrs. Carteret turned round in utter surprise; but all doubt was dispelled when Mr. Carteret's tall manly form rose up from his hiding place, and came towards them.

"I saw you coming in the distance, and could not resist giving you a little fright. I hope, Mrs. Vervan, you'll forgive me. I am glad to see we have such a valiant champion growing up here, however," patting Charles affectionately on the head.

"But where?" said Mrs. Carteret to her husband, after the first greetings were over; "where do you come from, and when did you arrive?"

"Only an hour or two ago, just after you had

started. A friend drove me down to within a mile or two of the Farm. I walked that far; but not being the least tired, determined to go on and meet you. What a lovely country this is."

"But how did you manage to meet us so cleverly?"

"A young lady, Miss Mary Vervan, gave me very good directions, and when I reached the park paling, I found a pony chaise and a boy, who advised me further."

"You saw the children, then?"

"Yes; they were busy feeding some unfortunate rabbits, who I expect will die of apoplexy before long, they looked so plethoric."

Nothing could exceed the gratification of the young Carterets at this unexpected arrival of their father. He had finished his business sooner than he expected, and was full of merriment and enjoyed his holiday like any boy.

The Farm he thought delightful—the girls looked so much better for country air—he already felt revived, and was so happy to be with his family again.

They walked merrily along, all talking as fast as possible. Jane, full of her flowers, her conservatory, and what she had done. Laura describing the house and pictures. Mrs. Carteret asking questions about home matters, and getting snatches of answers between short runs and races with the two boys.

"Hist!" said Mr. Carteret, all of a sudden, as he came to a full stop. "Hush! look there."

Two fine little squirrels, with bushy tails, and fur of a reddish hue, were seated on their hind legs, on the ground, as if conversing together, whilst they munched away at some beech nuts, young acorns, or other food.

"Oh, what a pity Ada is not here to see her relations," exclaimed Charles.

At the sound of his voice, away went the squirrels,

faster than eye could follow them, one up one side, the other up the other side of a large tree near.

"There they are again," cried Edgar; "there, on that large branch. Do just look how they jump from bough to bough; it is quite wonderful. Hist! hist!"

"Oh, Papa," said Laura, "did you see that squirrel run down the tree head foremost, and run up the one near it again? There, look! the other follows, head foremost, too. I wonder how they hold on?"

"It is an oak that they have disappeared in," answered Mr. Carteret; "their nest is probably some where in that tree, only the foliage prevents our discovering it. They were, doubtless, a pair, male and female, from the friendly way they were sitting together."

"Yes," said Mr. Robarts, "they are very domestic little animals, attached to each other, and to the particular tree they may have built in. I daresay the woodmen here, could tell us something about this pair. I have known them go on living for years in the same tree, if not disturbed."

"I daresay," said Edgar, "they have got a precious lot of nuts stored up somewhere in that old tree, if I had had time I'd just have climbed up, and looked if I could find anything."

"Oh no, Edgar," said the kind-hearted Jane, "it would have been such a pity to have frightened and disturbed them."

"Oh, nonsense; I should have done no harm, besides, I want a young squirrel to tame, and I mean to come here one day and see if I can't get one."

"But what would you do with it, if you had it?—keeping them in cages seems to me so cruel, they are always moving about, as if they longed to get out."

"Oh, I should have tried to tame it, made it

know me, and come to be fed, and then should let it run free when it liked, and come to me when it wanted food."

"And if you succeeded," said his Grandfather, "in overcoming its shy, timid nature, you would unfit it for freedom—other squirrels would look upon it as an unnatural creature, and a dangerous companion."

"Well, we shall see," said Edgar, "if I get one."

"How very red their fur is," remarked Edith.

"Yes, my dear, because now, in the beginning of August, they have got their gay summer suit on. In winter, the fur is duller, greyer in colour, and much closer and fuller, so as to provide greater warmth, and make them less conspicuous, when all the leaves are off the trees."

"Then they don't go to sleep all winter, like dormice?" inquired Jane,

"Not this common squirrel, at any rate," replied her mother; "for I remember, when a girl, at Munich, in the depth of the winter, whilst dressing myself in the morning, frequently seeing the squirrels running about under trees, in the English garden, upon which our house looked.

"It is astonishing," said Mr. Carteret, "that they should be seen so close to a town."

"The English garden is a large tract of ground, skirting the city, full of fine wood and plantations, and, early in the morning, is quite undisturbed—for at no time is it a thoroughfare; indeed, in some of the more remote parts of the park, there is a good deal of game."

"Here we are," cried the boys, "at the Chestnut Avenue."

This grass road, between two rows of fine sweet or Spanish chestnuts, stretched from one side of the park to the other, and diminished almost to a point, at the furthest extremity; it seemed as if there

was hardly room to pass out between the trees, so narrow did the opening become.

"The nuts never grow to any size here, I suppose," said Mr. Carteret.

"No! or I should have recommended the young ladies to have gathered some, and taken them home."

"Why the young ladies especially, Grandpapa?" asked Edith.

"Because, my dear, my favourite old Evelyn says, he had 'read, in a good author, that bread made from the flower of the nut, makes women well-complexioned.'"

"Well, they haven't done much towards improving the complexion of people in Spain, and the South of France, where the chestnuts are very much used for food," observed Mrs. Carteret.

"I shouldn't mind eating them at all," cried Edith. "I remember, when we were at Esher, one summer, we picked up quantities in the park at Claremont, and roasted them on a shovel—they were so good."

"I believe they do obtain some size there, and in warm sheltered places in England; here the chestnut is a good deal planted for underwood, as it makes capital hop-poles," said Mr. Roberts.

"Do let us come here some day," said Charles, "and walk from one end of this avenue to the other. I should like to see how long we should be doing it."

"Or, what do you say to running a race from one end to the other, you and Edgar," said Mr. Carteret.

"A walking match would be better," said Edgar. "I would give Charles a good five minutes start, and beat him in the end."

"Done!" said Charles.

They had now reached the boundary of the park, having made a very tolerable circuit. They found the pony-chaise and carriage waiting outside the little gate for them; but Mr. Carteret said he should pre-

fer walking, and the two boys decided to accompany him. Edgar was probably not anxious to exhibit himself as a whip again; so old Bess was left to Mrs. Veryan's more merciful driving, Mrs. Carteret taking her place in the carriage.

Their drive was prolonged a little, to a spot called the 'One Tree Field,' an elevated position, from which an extensive and panoramic view of the Weald of Kent below, and the adjacent country beyond, was obtained. Seats had been placed round the large tree, which had given the name to the place. They stood some time admiring this noble prospect, and watching the pretty effect of the distant railway train in this richly wooded district, its passage marked only by the smoke, which rose, writhed, and coiled itself about like a white serpent, as it flitted along.

Mr. Carteret and the two boys had just reached the Farm when they drove up.

"Hey day!" cried Mr. Carteret; "what have we here? two May-day queens, or Flora and attendant nymph?" as Ada and Mary Veryan, smiling and blushing, ran forward, almost covered with flowers. They had garlands on their heads and across their shoulders, and white willow sticks in their hands, with bunches of flowers at the top. The two little girls looked really very pretty, and very happy.

"My dear children, you must have been robbing Mrs. Price's garden unmercifully," said Mrs. Carteret.

"Oh, Mrs. Price said we might have what we liked, Mamma, and we made these wreaths all ourselves. Mary showed me how to make mine, and we had only just finished them in time, before you came," cried Ada.

Meantime Jane looked anxiously at their wreaths, a dreadful foreboding seized her, that these bright scarlet geraniums, the gay verbenas, cinerarias, fuchsias, &c., were from her cherished plants. She ran hastily to the little conservatory, followed by Charles,

who, from being called upon frequently to sweep it out, felt nearly as much interest and pride in the flowers as Jane herself. It was as she feared, scarce a blossom was to be seen, everything had been mercilessly, ruthlessly gathered, not cut by a careful hand, but hastily broken off, young buds, tender branches and all.

"Oh, Charles!" she exclaimed, ready to cry with vexation; "how very, very provoking. You see what the children have done; and I was so anxious to have it all nice to show Papa, and intended to bring him here the first thing. How could Mrs. Price allow them to do it?"

"It's that plague Mary Veryan, I know," said Charles, as he ran back to the lawn, where they were standing, and in his indignation, regardless of Mrs. Veryan's or his mother's presence, burst out with: "You naughty, tiresome children! What do you mean by taking all Jane's flowers in this way? spoiling all her plants. It is your doing, I know (to Mary), you spoilt, selfish girl. Ada would not have dared to do such a thing alone."

"Charles, Charles!" said his mother, as Mary Veryan, thus violently called to account, burst into tears, and little Ada looked frightened out of her life.

"I don't care, Mother, she is spoilt and selfish—just to make these stupid wreaths, they have ruined everything that Jane and I took so much trouble about."

"Oh, Charles," said Jane, now coming up, "don't say any more about it—never mind me, I've got over it now, I was just vexed at first; but the children have been very happy making their wreaths—don't let us spoil their pleasure. Don't cry, dear Mary; I don't mind about it. I am glad you have got the flowers—they look so pretty."

"They are not your flowers," sobbed out Mary: "and Mrs. Price said we might have some."

"Hush! my dear child," said her mother.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Mr. Carteret, now coming up. "Flora in tears!—flowers and showers; but what is it, my child—what is it, Ada?"

"It was all my fault," said Jane, answering for them. "When I came home, I was vexed to find that the flowers in the conservatory were gone, because I wanted you so much to see how nice it looked; and I could not help saying so to Charles, and he was angry with the two children, who are not to blame, because Mrs. Price allowed them to gather the flowers."

"My dear, good-tempered Jane," said her father, taking her hand, "I can understand your vexation, because I know how much pains and trouble you have taken with these flowers—you wished to give me pleasure by showing them to me; but you give me a great deal more, my dear girl, by showing me how much self-control you have, and how amiably you can bear such little trials of temper. It makes me happier to see this than to look at a hundred conservatories."

And Jane thought to herself, that her father's approbation was worth a thousand flowers.

"And as for you, little ones," said Mr. Carteret, taking Mary Vervan on his knee, "I suppose you could not resist the temptation of picking every flower you saw. Well, I am afraid I should have been as greedy at your age, it is so difficult to know which is the best till one has gathered them all. So you made these wreaths all yourselves; you must tell me how you did it, that next time I go to a ball, I may have one."

"Oh, Papa!" said Ada, laughing, and Mary could not help laughing, too, at the idea of Mr. Carteret in a wreath; but she began eagerly to explain how they had first picked a soft pliable twig, or branch, of wil-

low, and then got some thread from the maid, and had bound the flowers, one by one, on the willow wand; and then, when thick and full enough, had bent it round, and tied it together.

Peace was restored, smiles and laughter succeeded the tears. Mr. Carteret made the two children dance together on the lawn, and all was merriment and good feeling by the time tea was announced.

"As for you, Charles," said his father, laughing, "you have very soon lost your character as a defender of the fair sex."

Mrs. Veryan was perhaps the least comfortable of the party, she could not but allow to herself that, compared with the Carterets, Mary was spoilt, Mary was selfish. She began to think that the habit she and Mr. Veryan had of consulting their children's feelings, and gratifying every wish, was not good for them. Edgar was the most unselfish of the three—school discipline had taught him a few lessons.

The next morning, when Jane went rather reluctantly and sorrowfully to tend her poor flowers, she could not help giving a scream of surprise, on opening the door, which quickly brought Charles to see what was the matter. Twelve splendid geraniums, in full bloom, scarlet, white, all colours, stood on the lower shelf, making the denuded conservatory look quite gay again. A little card hung from one of them, and on it was written—

"TO JANE, WITH MRS. VERYAN'S LOVE."





CHAPTER XII.

CELEBRATED TREES.

TREES, like individuals, become celebrated from various causes; in the words of the poet, "Some have greatness thrust upon them," by being connected with events of interest in the world's or a nation's history, or in the life of man—such as the olive trees on the Mount of Olives, recalling days of deep and holy interest—the willow tree which marks the site where the great Napoleon's remains once rested, and the oak which sheltered Charles the Second.

Some "are born great:" a royal, a saintly, or a remarkable hand has planted them; like the cedars of Lebanon, said to have been planted by Solomon; the trees planted by St. Dominic, or Thomas Aquinas, or Charles the Fifth; Shakespeare's mulberry tree; Chaucer's oak; Pope's willow, and so on.

"Others become great" from individual peculiarities: like the tree in the Tuileries gardens, which invariably comes into leaf before a certain day in the year, and nearly a month sooner than its companions; others from unusual size, height, or length of life. For the greatest age of trees we must turn to the East; for the greatest size and height, to East and West alike. Recent travellers in the Americas have given us astounding descriptions of gigantic forest trees; and earlier travellers have told us

of trees in China so enormous and wide-spreading, that two hundred sheep were folded under a single branch of one of these monsters, considered to be a thousand years old, and situated near the city of Kien.

"But after all," says Evelyn, when speaking of the old oaks of Germany—within whose hollow trunks houses and forts were constructed; or of the chestnut on Mount Etna, which could contain a flock of sheep in its stem; "we need not go out of Great Britain for instances of ancient or of capacious hollow trees." Of the latter kind, he mentions one "at Kidlington Green, in Oxfordshire, which had been frequently used (before the death of the late Judge Morton, near whose house it stood,) for the immediate imprisonment of vagabonds and malefactors, before they could be conveniently removed to the county gaol."

Another oak, called Damory's oak, in Dorsetshire, the largest oak of which mention is made in England, another author says, was sixty-eight feet in circumference, "and the cavity of it, which was sixteen feet long and twenty feet high, was, about the time of the Commonwealth, used by an old man for the entertainment of travellers, as an ale house. The dreadful storm in the third year of the last century shattered this majestic tree; and in 1755 the last vestiges of it were sold for firewood."

"Some oaks," continues the author who has recorded this, "have been as celebrated for being the records of historical events, as others have been for their magnitude; although a part of this celebrity may no doubt be fabulous. Not a hundred years ago, the oak in the New Forest, against which the arrow of Sir William Tyrrel glanced before it killed William Rufus, is said to have been standing, though in such a state of decay, that Lord Delaware erected a monument to indicate the spot. An oak of still more venerable pretensions now stands, or lately

stood, at Torwood Wood, in Stirlingshire, under the shadow of which, the Scottish patriot, Wallace, is reported to have convened his followers, and impressed upon them, not only the necessity of delivering their country from the thralldom of Edward, but their power of doing it, if they were so determined."

Durable as the wood of the oak is, it must in that respect give way to the Cypress, which Evelyn tells us was thought by the ancients capable of lasting to eternity. It is proof against moth or worm. It obtains, in countries suited to its growth, a great size. At Venice planks of this wood "above four feet in breadth" were to be seen; and formerly, relates Evelyn, "the valves of the doors of St. Peter's Church at Rome were framed of this material, lasting from the Great Constantine's to the Pope Eugenius the Fourth's time, almost six hundred years, and then as fresh and entire as if new; but the Pope would needs change them for gates of brass—not in my mind so venerable as those of cypress."

But after all, none of the peculiarities or oddities of any of the trees yet enumerated can compare with the marvellous history of one in Thibet, related by M. Huc, a Jesuit missionary, travelling in Tartary and Thibet, who, with his companion, M. Gabet, had an opportunity of visiting and examining this strange tree, known by the name of the "tree of ten thousand images," from each leaf having a Thibetian character upon it. It appears, that at the foot of a mountain where Tsong-kaba, a great buddhist reformer was born, his followers and admirers have founded a "Lamaserie"—a sort of conventual establishment, which the Lamas or priests form by building their cells or small habitations near each other, and living together under certain rules and restrictions—there this wonderful tree was to be seen, and was visited by pilgrims from all parts of Thibet and Tartary. We will translate M. Huc's description. He says:—

"It will naturally be expected that we should say

something about this tree. Does it still exist? Did we see it? What is there peculiar about it? What must one think about its marvellous leaves? Here are questions enough for any one. We will try then to answer them as well as we possibly can.

“Yes, this tree still exists; and we had heard it too often spoken of during our journey, not to be impatient to visit it. At the foot of the mountain where the Lamasery is built, and not far from the principal Buddhist temple, is a large square enclosure, formed by brick walls. We entered this vast court, and were able at our leisure to examine the tree whose branches we had already perceived from without. Our observations were at first eagerly directed to the leaves; and we were thunderstruck at seeing, in fact, well formed Thibetian characters upon each of them. They were of a green colour, sometimes lighter, sometimes darker, than the leaf itself. Our first idea was to suspect the good faith of the Lamas; but after having examined everything with the most minute attention, it was impossible to discover the least fraud. The characters seemed to form part of the leaf, like its veins and tissues. The position they occupied was not always the same; being sometimes seen at the extremity, sometimes at the middle of the leaf; sometimes on its back or sides. The young leaves showed the characters half formed, and in process of formation; the bark of the trunk and branches, which detached itself a little, like that of the plane tree, was equally covered with characters: on taking off a piece of old bark, the undefined characters just beginning to sprout, were seen upon the new; and, singular to say, they frequently differed from those above them. We sought everywhere, but without success, for some trace of deception—cold sweat stood on our foreheads—others, cleverer than we are, may perhaps be able to give some satisfactory explanation of this singular tree; but as for us, we give it up. People will smile, doubtless, at our ignorance; but what signifies that

to us, provided the truth of our story is not suspected. The tree of 'ten thousand images' appeared to us to be very old. Its trunk, which could hardly be spanned by three men, is not more than eight feet high; its branches do not rise high, but spread themselves out in feathered masses, and are extremely bushy. Some of them are decayed, and falling off from old age. The leaves are evergreen. The wood, which is of a reddish colour, has a delicious smell, a little resembling that of cinnamon. The Lamas informed us, that in the summer, towards the eighth moon, it produces large red flowers of extreme beauty. They also assured us, that in no other place was a tree of this description to be found—that they had endeavoured to propagate it by seeds and by budding in several other Lamaseries of Tartary and Thibet, but that every attempt proved fruitless.

"The Emperor Khangî, having made a pilgrimage to Kounboun, erected a dome of silver at his own expense, above the 'tree of a thousand images;' and further presented to the Grand Lama a beautiful black horse, which could travel, it was said, a thousand *lis** a-day. Also a saddle, ornamented with precious stones. The horse is dead, but the saddle is still to be seen in one of the Buddhist temples, and is the object of special veneration."

Such is M. Huc's account. Seeing no reason to doubt the truth of his statement, that he actually did see, and examine such a tree—and in the absence of any more precise information upon the subject, we can only look upon "the tree of ten thousand images" as a strange and unaccountable freak of nature. Some people may be inclined to reject the whole story as unworthy of our belief, from the circumstance of M. Huc being a Jesuit. Most of the information we possess, however, about the remote parts of the Chinese empire, we owe to similar sources; and it is only fair to state, that geographical

* 100 *Lis*=35·91 English miles.

information, and observations obtained from Jesuit missionaries have generally been found as correct, and indeed more to be relied upon than those of chance travellers, merchants, traders, &c. The Jesuits select their missionaries from amongst men specially qualified for such arduous and often dangerous labours, by a love of enterprise, zeal, endurance of hardships, facility of acquiring languages, and previous training and education—which enables them to take observations, and map down correctly the features of a country. By their courage and energy paths have been made over what were before trackless regions. They have often been the first, literally and figuratively, to break ground and clear the way for others; and in this character of pioneers, we are one and all their debtors.

There exists, however, another still more remarkable sacred tree—the age of which, from authentic records, may be counted by thousands of years, instead of hundreds. It is probably the very oldest tree in the world; and the following account of it, given by Sir Emerson Tennant, in his work upon Ceylon, is so precise in every particular, that it seems difficult to disbelieve the assertions of its great antiquity, backed as they are by a connected series of records.”

Sir Emerson Tennant says, when describing the once magnificent city of Anarajapoorā, “That which renders the once fallen city illustrious even in its ruins, is the possession of the Jaya, Sri Matrā Bodin—Wohause, ‘the victorious, illustrious, supreme lord, the sacred Bo tree;’ the planting of which forms the grandest episode in the sacred annals of Ceylon.

“Every ancient race has had its sacred tree: the Chaldean, the Hebrew, the Greek, the Roman, and the Druids, have had their groves, their elms, and their oaks, under which to worship. Like them the Brahmans have their Kalpā tree in Paradise; and the Banyan in the vicinity of their temples; and the Buddhists, in conformity with immemorial practice,

selected as their sacred tree the Pippul, which is closely allied to the Banyan, yet sufficiently distinguished from it to serve as the emblem of a new and peculiar worship. It was whilst retiring under the shade of this tree in Uruwela that Gotama received Buddhahood—hence its adoption as an object of reverence by his followers; and, in all probability, its adoration preceded the use of images and temples in Ceylon.

The Bo-tree (*ficus religiosa*), differs from the Banyan (*ficus indicus*) by sending down no roots from its branches. Its heart-shaped leaves, with long attenuated points, are attached to the stem by so slender a stalk, that in the profoundest calm they appear to be ever in motion—and thus, like the leaves of the aspen which, from the tradition that the cross was made from that wood, the Syrians believe to tremble in remembrance of the events of the crucifixion, those of the Bo-tree are supposed by the Buddhists to exhibit a tremulous veneration, connected with the sacred scenes of which they were the witnesses.

A branch of this tree, the very tree under which Gotama reposed when the doctrines of the new faith were revealed to him, was sent by Asora, King of Magadha, to the sovereign then reigning in Ceylon, at his especial request, and by him it was planted, with great rejoicing and solemnity; the small branch struck, flourished, and became the great Bo-tree.

The Bo-tree is, in all probability, the oldest historical tree in the world. It was planted 288 years before Christ, and hence it is now 2150 years old. Ages varying from one to five thousand years have been assigned to the Baobabs of Senegal, the Eucalyptus of Tasmania, the Dragon tree of Orotava, the Wellingtonia of California, and the Chesnut of Mount Etna. But all these estimates are matters of conjecture; and such calculations, however ingenious, must be purely inferential: whereas the age of the Bo-tree

is matter of record. Its conservancy has been an object of solicitude to successive dynasties; and the story of its vicissitudes has been preserved in a series of continuous chronicles amongst the most authentic that have been handed down by mankind. Compared with it, the Oak of Ellerslie is but a sapling—and the Conqueror's Oak in Windsor Forest barely numbers half its years. The Yew trees of Fountain's Abbey are believed to have flourished there twelve hundred years ago. The Olives in the garden of Gethsemane were full grown when the Saracens were expelled from Jerusalem: and the Cypress of Soma in Lombardy, is said to have been a tree in the time of Julius Cæsar. Yet the Bo-tree is older than the oldest of these by a century, and would almost seem to verify the prophecy that it would "flourish and be green for ever."

The degree of sanctity with which this extraordinary tree has been invested in the imagination of the Buddhists, may be compared to the feeling of veneration with which Christians would regard the attested wood of the cross. To it, kings have even dedicated their dominions, in testimony of their belief that it is a branch of the identical fig tree under which Gotama Buddha reclined at Uruwelaya, when he underwent his apotheosis.

When the King of Magadha, in compliance with the request of the Sovereign of Ceylon, was willing to send him a portion of that sanctified tree, to be planted at Anarajapoorā, he was deterred by the reflection that "it cannot be meet to lop it with any weapon;" but, "under the instruction of the high priest, using vermilion in a golden pencil, he made a streak on the branch, which, 'severing itself, hovered over the mouth of a vase filled with scented soil,' into which it struck its roots and descended."

Taking the legend as a sacred law, the Buddhist priests to the present day object religiously to "lop it with any weapon," and are contented to collect

any leaves which, severing themselves, may chance to fall to the ground; these are regarded as treasures by the pilgrims, who carry them away to the remotest parts of the island. It is even suspected that, rather than strip the branches, the importunities of an impatient devotee are sometimes silenced by the pious fraud of substituting the foliage of some other fig for that of the exalted Bo-tree. I expressed a wish to have a few leaves of the genuine plant, and the native officer undertook to bring them to me *at night*.

The other Bo-trees which are found in the vicinity of every temple in Ceylon, are said to be all derived from the parent tree at Anarajapoorā, but they have been propagated by seeds; the priesthood adhering in this respect to the precedent recorded in the Mahacoanto (historical work), when Mahindo himself, "taking up a fruit as it fell, gave it to the king to plant." Nor is this superstitious anxiety a feeling of recent growth; it can be traced to the remotest periods of Buddhism—and the same homage which is paid to the tree at the present day was wont to be manifested two thousand years ago. Age after age the sacred annals record the works successive sovereigns erected for the preservation of the Bo-tree: the walls which they built around it, the carvings with which they adorned them, the stone steps which they constructed to lead to the sacred enclosure. The latter were raised by a king, A.D. 182, and in 223 a stone ledge was added to the enclosing wall. Century after century repairs or additions to the buildings are recorded in the Singhalese annals. King Abhaya, A.D. 240, placed "a cornice on the parapet at the southern entrance, four hexagonal pillars of stone at the corners, and a statue of Buddha at each entrance. His successor, Mahassan, caused two statues of bronze to be cast, and erected in the hall of the great Bo-tree; and mention is made in the sacred annals, nearly two thousand years later, of the celebration of a festival which, "from the period the supreme Bo-

tree was planted, the rulers of Lanka held every twelfth year, for the purpose of watering it."

"The author of the Mahacoanto, who wrote between the years 459 and 498, A.D., after relating the ceremonials which had been observed nearly eight hundred years before at the planting of the venerated tree by Mahindo, concluded by saying, "Thus this monarch of the forest, endowed with miraculous powers, has stood for ages, in the delightful Mahamego garden in Lanka, promoting the spiritual welfare of its inhabitants and the propagation of true religion."

In A.D. 804, the reigning king "caused a hall to be built in honour of, and near to, the Bo-tree; and in 1153 Prakama-Bahu made a house round the Bo-tree. It will be observed that throughout these notices (and they are but a few out of a multitude), the object of veneration is always alluded to as *the* Bo-tree, no doubt having ever been suggested as to its identity. And a still later authority than those quoted, speaking of Wijago-Bahu who recovered the southern division of Ceylon from the Malabars, says, "he was a descendant of the family who had brought the Bo-tree, *yet existing*, to Ceylon." Regarded with so much idolatry, tended with attention so unremitting, resorted to from all lands in which the name of Buddha is held in veneration, and its vicissitudes revealed in the sacred history of an island, the inhabitants of which considered themselves blessed by the possession of so heavenly a treasure; the conjecture (had it ever been hazarded) that the original tree might have died, and its place been supplied by one secretly substituted, may fairly be regarded as an impossibility. Such an event as the death of the great Bo-tree of Anarajapooru would have spread consternation not only throughout Ceylon, but over Siam and China. It would have been regarded as a visitation too portentous to be contemplated with equanimity, and recorded with a becoming sense of

the calamity in the annals of every Buddhist nation in Asia.

It is curious indeed, as Sir Emerson Tennant remarks, that amongst all the internal commotions and changes in Ceylon, when the sovereign power was forcibly transferred from one race to another, the Bo-tree was uniformly spared, nay, even protected by the conquerors.

At the present day the aspect of the tree is that of extreme antiquity; the branches which have strayed at their will far beyond the outline of its enclosure, the rude pillars of masonry that have been carried out to support them, the retaining walls which shore up the parent stem, the time worn steps by which the place is approached, and the grotesque carvings that decorate the stonework and friezes—all impart the conviction that the tree which they encompass has been watched over with abiding solicitude, and regarded with an excess of veneration that could never attach to an object of dubious authenticity. The marvellous tree is situated in an enclosure approached through the porch of the temple, the priests of which are charged with its preservation. The principal building is modern and plain; but amongst the materials of which it is built are some antique carvings of singular excellence.

Such is the history and account of this old tree, remarkable not only for its great age as well as its vigour, but also for its preservation. Probably the traditions that have prevented it from being lopped or cut have materially contributed to that preservation. Many a fine old tree, in this country and elsewhere, might have been preserved longer to us in health and beauty if tended with any sort of care. The storms which at times sweep over our island cannot be guarded against, but the maiming, cutting, knotching, and occasional barking, that trees of any size are subjected to, is much to be lamented, as hastening the work of decay. The celebrated Fairlop oak was

seriously injured and its destruction accelerated by the fires of the gipsies attending the fair held round it.

It will be curious indeed, if the great Bo-tree should be destined to survive the religion which first made it remarkable. In such a case, it is to be hoped that when the hand of superstition ceases to tend it, it may still find some careful guardian to cherish and protect it as much as possible from the rude assaults of the idle and thoughtless, and thus preserve it for the pilgrimages of future travellers, who may view it with interest—not only as an enduring monument of antiquity, but as a living witness to the facility with which falsehood obtains possession of the human mind, and the strength and perseverance of its hold.

Viewed in this light, in conjunction with its great age, the Bo-tree may now fairly be considered, even by those who are not votaries of Buddhism, as the most interesting and most celebrated tree in the world.





CHAPTER XIII.

IMPORTANT LETTERS—LOOKING AT THE STARS—THE POLAR STAR—ARCHERY—A VILLAGE FAIR—FAIRS IN GENERAL—WESTERHAM—A DAY AT HEVER—THE CASTLE—ANNE BOLEYN AND HER DAUGHTER.

AMONGST the letters placed upon Mrs. Carteret's breakfast table the morning after their long walk in the park, there were two, the contents of which were very interesting to the young people. The first was from their brother Hugh, announcing his approaching return home from Eton for the holidays; the second was from their governess, Miss Murray, who wrote to say that she should not be at the farm that week according to arrangement, as she had unfortunately slipped down and sprained her ankle badly—and was, consequently, unable to move; and she feared also it would be some weeks before she should be well enough to travel.

"Poor Miss Murray! I am so sorry!" exclaimed Laura.

"Poor Miss Murray! I am so sorry!" echoed Jane.

"And you, Ada?" asked her papa, "are you not sorry?"

"I am sorry for her sprain," replied Ada, colouring.

"But not that she cannot come, I suppose," said her father, smiling.

"You girls are in luck!" cried Charles; "here

you have had good six weeks' holidays, and now are going to have six weeks more."

"Do not be too sure of that," said his mother.

Mr. Carteret laughed to see how completely Ada's face fell.

"No, my dear girls, you must not be completely idle for so long a time. I cannot quite supply Miss Murray's place, but I shall do something towards it," said their mother. "Laura, you must assist me with Ada. I hope she will try and give as little trouble as possible; and, since there is no time like the present, we will begin to-day."

Accordingly, about half an hour after breakfast, when Mrs. Carteret had arranged her housekeeping affairs, she called her daughters to her, and then drew out a scheme of instruction, to be followed out under her superintendence until Miss Murray should be able to resume her place amongst them. When their morning's occupation was over, the two elder girls sat down to write to her and express their sympathy for her accident. Mr. Carteret, to please his children, dined early with them the first day after his return; and, after their usual afternoon's reading and work was over, went out with them to inspect the mysteries of the farmyard—to be taken into the dairy, and over the Oast house. After this, they strolled on into the hop garden; the young people, who had not been in it for a fortnight, were quite astonished to see how rapidly the plants had come on. The poles were now completely covered, and the fruit, indeed, beginning to form. Mr. Price, whom they met shortly after, told them it promised to be an early season—at least, if the fine hot weather continued, for everything looked well: the plants were healthy, and at present free from the fly—a little insect which sometimes covers the hops like a blight. Mr. Price and Mr. Carteret were before long deep in conversation on farming matters and farming prospects; and the young people amused themselves

meantime with picking the large white daisies, as Ada called them, and playing the game of "Je t'aime, un peu, pas beaucoup, passionnement, pas du tout." Ada was allowed to sit up late that evening; for as it was fine and warm, and the stars came out brilliantly in a perfectly cloudless sky, Mr. Carteret took advantage of it to show his daughters the polar star, and explain to them how they might always find it for themselves by reason of its relative position to the Great Bear. He told them several stories connected with it—of travellers who had lost their way being able to direct their course by observation of this star, and then repeated some portions of L. E. L.'s lines to it, composed during her voyage southwards to Cape Coast Castle in Africa, and drawn forth from her watching the star, as she said, "sink lower and lower, every night, towards the horizon, until at last it disappeared altogether."

"Of course," explained Mrs. Carteret, "it was the poetess's place of observation that had altered, not the star's position. The pole star, I have explained to you, is one of what we call the fixed stars, belonging to the northern hemisphere, and invisible to the inhabitants of certain southern latitudes."

THE POLAR STAR.

"A star has left the kindling sky—

A lovely northern light—

How many planets are on high,

But that has left the night!

I miss its bright familiar face;

It was a friend to me,

Associate with my native place,

And those beyond the sea.

It rose upon our English sky,

Shone o'er our English land,

And brought back many a loving eye,

And many a gentle hand.

It seemed to answer to my thought,
 It called the past to mind,
 And with its welcome presence brought
 All I had left behind.

* * * *

Mine lovely polar star! mine eyes
 Still turned the first on thee,
 Till I have felt a sad surprise
 That none looked up with me.

But thou hast sunk below the wave,
 Thy radiant place unknown;
 I seem to stand beside a grave,
 And stand by it alone.

Farewell! ah, would to me were given
 A power upon thy light;
 What words upon our English heaven
 Thy loving rays should write!

Kind messages of love and hope
 Upon thy rays should be;
 Thy shining orbit would have scope
 Scarcely enough for me.

Oh, Fancy; vain as it is fond,
 And little needed too;
 My friends, I need not look beyond
 My heart to look for you."

A day or two after, Hugh Carteret came home from Eton. He was a tall good-tempered fellow of fourteen, full of life and spirits, but alas! beginning to think it was manly to affect indifference and listlessness.

"Well, this is not so bad a place," said he to his sisters as they walked round the garden.

"It is charming," said Jane; "so much to ourselves—we can do just as we like here."

"The country about is certainly very delightful," remarked Laura in a more general manner,

"Oh! it's the very nicest place in all the world!" cried Ada, enthusiastically—"and Knole Park is delicious. You never saw such trees, and deer, and—"

"Cows, and sheep, and grass, and ground, &c. &c.!" said Hugh. "A park is a park, and trees are trees, Ada; and I suppose I have seen parks and trees enough in my time, not to go into fits at the sight of Knole. Children are so enthusiastic always;—but who are these parties coming?"

"Edgar and Edith Vervan," whispered Jane. "I thought Edgar would find you out; he thinks so much of you because you are at Eton."

Edgar, however, for once, seemed shy. After just shaking hands with Hugh, he took to chasing Charles in and out between the flower beds. Hugh, meantime, seated himself on the swing, and surveyed the scene with an air of quiet unconcern; he made no sort of advance to Edgar, who, after some little time, came up abruptly, and said:

"Shall we swing you?"

"Thanks, no!" answered Hugh.

"Do you like riding?"

"Well—I believe so."

"Have you got a horse at Eton?"

"No; I should think not! Boys don't keep horses at school."

"I have my pony."

"Pray, have all the fellows at your school ponies?"

"Fresham has, but not the other fellow; there are only three of us."

"Oh! then you are being privately coached?"

"Yes; but I am going to Eton next year—I suppose I shall see you there."

"You'll be in the Lower School, I fancy."

Edgar coloured violently.

"Do they put boys of my age into the Lower School?"

"Well, I don't know what your age is, but never

having been at school before, I should say you won't be placed very high.

"I don't care much where they place me, when I go: all I know is, I shall make up my mind where I mean to be—and there I shall be, before many months are over."

"Oh, I see, clever!"

"Or determined, which you like. I suppose one must work if one wants a high place; but I can work if I choose."

Having delivered himself of this speech, Edgar turned away rather offended with Hugh's non-chalance, and challenged Charles to an archery contest. The two boys ran off for bows and arrows, and the target stand, which they fixed up in the adjoining field—and were soon very happy, and much interested in their sport. Hugh, after a time, tired of swinging to and fro, strolled into the field, and looked on at the shooting. Charles was very anxious that he should join them; and pressed him so earnestly, offering him his own bow, that at last Hugh condescended to say he would shoot, provided Charles picked up his arrows for him. To this Charles agreed; and Hugh took his turn with them. It was with secret satisfaction Edgar saw how indifferent a performer he was. The two younger boys had had a good deal of practice together, and Hugh of course little or none; besides, Edgar really shot well, and he rather piqued himself upon excelling in boyish sports and games, exercises, or feats of strength—and living always in the country, he had opportunities for indulging these tastes that town boys cannot have. His father's place, Trethuan, about six or seven miles from Bodmin, was situated in a wild, rugged moorland district, where a ride across country requires a good seat and a firm hand; and the low stone walls, and noisy streams tumbling over their rocky beds, or narrowing between steep and dangerous banks, reminds one of

Scotland or the north of England. Here Edgar had early been initiated by his father into the mysteries of Izaak Walton's recreation, and had learnt to ride, and leap, and climb, like a mountaineer—and at an uncle's in Devonshire he had handled a cue at the billiard table, and rejoiced on a fine afternoon in the old bowling green, where he and his cousins played many a match. In sports and games, his education was tolerably complete. James the First himself could hardly have desired his son to do more in that way. In other matters he had not made quite so much progress. At a preparatory school for Eton, to which he had been sent, he was so incorrigibly idle that his father thought it best to remove him, and place him where, from their being fewer pupils, he would have stricter surveillance and greater attention; he should not go to Eton, Mr. Veryan said, until he had reached a certain point in his studies; and latterly, Master Edgar having taken it into his head to work hard, was getting on as a boy with good abilities can do when he gives his whole attention to anything.

Hugh, roused from his listlessness, by finding himself inferior to his two younger companions, became excessively anxious to do better; his correct eye and firmer hand enabled him, after a few rounds, to make great progress; and he became so interested in it, that he forgot all about not picking up the arrows, and ran forward as eagerly as either of the other two to see where his arrows had fallen—and was quite excited when he happened to hit the target. Edgar's experience told him that before long Hugh would shoot as well, if not better, than himself; the consciousness of this stimulated him to greater efforts—he determined to keep the first place. Meantime the greatest cordiality and good humour prevailed; and before long they were joined by Edith, Laura, and Jane, and agreed to have a match. Edith, who was nearly as good a shot as Edgar, with Laura and Hugh

on one side—Jane, Charles, and Edgar on the other. They were all quite surprised when, being summoned to tea, they found an hour and a half had passed away.

“You must give us our revenge another day,” said Hugh to Edgar; for his side had been victorious.

“That we will; and I vote we keep to the same sides,” replied Edgar.

The two boys became good friends; but whenever Hugh resumed his former ridiculous manner, Edgar would go off with Charles. Mr. Carteret quizzed his son so unmercifully about it, that he had no choice but to give it up; and in a short time he became as natural and unaffected as any of the rest of the party.

“Should you like to go with us to Hever Castle on Wednesday, Hugh?” asked his father.

“If you please, sir. But where is Hever? Who lives there?”

“I really cannot answer your question, as to who lives there now, but a very great lady once lived there; a queen for a short space of time—”

“Anne Boleyn!” said Jane.

“Yes; Hever was Anne Boleyn’s early home. The house, I believe, is still habitable—but that you will see, if you care to go. I advise all who mean to go with me to brush up the history of the time a little, and then perhaps they will feel more interest in the old house.”

An expedition in prospect was always welcome news to the young people; and they assembled round their breakfast table a little earlier than usual on the morning in question, that they might be able to start in good time.

Mr. Carteret had hired a roomy open carriage to drive them to Westerham, a distance of rather more than eight miles, and had chosen to take this rather round about route because he and Mrs. Carteret were anxious to see some old friends who lived there, and who had kindly offered to send the whole party, accom-

panied by some of their own family, on to Hever in an omnibus they kept for going backwards and forwards to the station.

The morning was lovely, and the whole party were soon packed in the carriage—two in the rumble and five inside. The provisions were not forgotten; nor the sketching books and pencils, botanical box, &c.

They travelled rapidly along—their road now skirting the Wilderness and Knoles, now winding between verdant meadows, or hop gardens, in all the beauty of full luxuriant leaf; sometimes the red or white cowls of distant oast-houses were seen looking quite picturesque, when half shrouded in foliage: and at one village that they passed through a fair was going on.

“Dear me!” said Mr. Carteret, “it is so long since I have seen a country fair, I really must walk round, and have a look at my old friends, ‘the Fat Lady from York,’ and ‘the Irish Giant.’ Boys, will you like to walk round with me?”

Hugh and Charles jumped out readily; and Mrs. Carteret and her daughters waited for them in the carriage, and were much amused watching some boys and girls riding on donkeys. Early as it was, the business of pleasure had commenced; the poor donkeys were in great request—the charge was a penny a ride. Great was the laughter, and many the screams, when the unfortunate animals, flogged into a sort of gallop, occasionally left their riders in the dust; nothing daunted, however, the young *ladies* and *gentlemen*, as the donkey man called them, insisted on mounting again, and seemed greatly to enjoy the whole operation. The donkeys were evidently a good speculation; and there were the usual merry-go-rounds, swings, shooting galleries, and all the discordant noises of a thundering brass band: a ditto trumpet, a clown making absurd remarks, men puffing their wares, and showmen exhorting the public to patronize their exhibition—

"which was not in any way connected with the very inferior one round the corner."

Mr. Carteret and the boys were not long away; he brought a bag of gingerbread back with him, and gave it to Ada, saying—

"There, Ada! I am afraid its wretched stuff; but the gingerbread is not what it was when I was a boy. And the Fat Lady is not so fat, nor the Giant so tall; and, in short, fairs are sadly gone off—the shows are very second rate, and nothing seems to be sold now but gingerbread and sweets."

"Don't you think, Papa, the change must be more in you than the fair," said Laura, smiling.

"Perhaps so; but, seriously, fairs are not what they were, even within my recollection."

"Formerly," said Mrs. Carteret, "they were very important events indeed, for in the country where shops were scarce; people bought all manner of household stuffs—even their dresses, ribbons, and shoes; and hired their servants there too. In the midland counties, cheese was sold largely at fairs, which, in Warwickshire, were called mops by the country people; but now, since railroads have made communication with large towns so easy, village shops can supply better and cheaper goods than the itinerant trader, and the farmer's wife can get to the large town for her winter bonnet and silk dress; and servant girls are much too particular now-a-days where they go, to stand waiting in the fair to be hired by the first comer, for the quarter or year. To some extent, however, these customs I believe still prevail in Scotland."

"For my part, I think the sooner they are abolished altogether the better," said Mr. Carteret; "they only bring a number of worthless idle people together, and are of no use whatever but to amuse children."

"I should be sorry to see them quite die out," said Laura. "Mrs. Veryan was giving us, the other day, an amusing account of a little village in Cornwall,

where an annual horse fair takes place; the village must have been more important formerly, but now is a wretched little place, of about a dozen houses only; this fair takes place either on or very near Michaelmas-day, and every person thinks it essential to have a goose—people go from far and near to eat goose cooked there. Those who are too poor to have a whole one, join with others. All day long the poor geese are being cooked and eaten; and people seemed to think this, after all, quite as important as the buying and selling of horses. But in Germany, Mamma, fairs are still important—are they not?”

“Yes; in some places, I believe: but, generally speaking, they are on the decline there also. I was present at two—one at Coblenz, and one at Munich; the latter was very large, but did not contain much that ladies and gentlemen would come to buy. The former, though smaller, had goods of a more choice description. I should think now, the most important and really useful fairs were those held in Russia.”

“Pray, why are they called fairs?” inquired Jane of her father.

“From the Latin word *feria*, which means a holy day; for fairs were of old always held upon some saint’s day, or church festival: and when they ceased to be Holy days, they still continued, as far as the fair was concerned, holidays.”

At this moment the coachman turned round, and directed their attention to a large handsome-looking house on their left, and said it had once been the residence of the Emperor of the French, when residing in this country as Prince Louis Napoleon; “but,” added the man, “the present owner has greatly improved it since his day.” Brasted Park, the place in question, was just outside the long street of the not very prepossessing village of Brasted. As they approached Westerham, the birth place of General Wolfe, the scenery about became very

attractive; and when they drove up to Mr. Lloyd's house, the young people were not sorry to walk about and see something of this pretty place, whilst their parents paid a visit to their old friends.

In half an hour's time, a servant sent to look for them, summoned them to a luncheon of fruit, which, after their early breakfast and long morning drive, was very acceptable. When thus refreshed, they started again in Mr. Lloyd's omnibus, with the son of their host, a young man of two or three and twenty, and his sister. These two good-naturedly pointed out any places of interest that they passed on the road—which, however, as they left Westerham far behind them, became less picturesque and flatter. Then Mr. Lloyd told them how in one of the rooms of Hever Castle, there were some dark, mysterious stains on the floor, supposed to be blood—and how a gentleman who once went over the house with a bloodhound could with difficulty restrain the dog from tearing up the floor; and then, of course, every one was satisfied that some horrid murder had been committed there, and the victim buried beneath those very boards: but, for his part, he believed the real state of the case was—here he paused mysteriously; his young hearers eagerly exclaimed:—

“Oh, tell us! do tell us what you think it must have been! What do you think it is?”

“Do you really wish to know?”

“Oh yes. Please tell us! please do!”

“Well then, I think it a mere cock and bull story.”

Mr. Carteret laughed—the young ones were disappointed. Ada was still mystified, and asked, “What is a cock and bull story?”

“What! don't you know, Ada?” said Charles; “it's a sell—chaff.”

“Your explanation, Charlie, is not much more lucid,” said his father.

He then explained to Ada the meaning of the

phrase, and its odd origin—and this led them to discuss similar odd expressions: for instance the French word *canard* for deceptive stories. Passing by an inn, with the favourite Kentish sign of “the Rose and Crown,” they got from odd sayings and expressions to old inn signs; and these subjects, full of entertainment and curiosity, occupied them so entirely that everyone expressed surprise when the carriage suddenly stopped and they were told they had arrived at Hever. All jumped eagerly out of the carriage, glad to breathe the open air and shake off the dust.

“Why, there is a moat, I declare!” exclaimed Hugh.

“Yes,” replied Mr. Lloyd; “and you will see as we pass under the gate-house, what is now not often to be seen preserved in old houses, a good strong portcullis.”

“I dare say the ex-Lord Mayor had no idea of being robbed by some of his lawless neighbours in the Weald; he probably found the moat here, and preserved it when he built this house.”

“Who was the ex-Lord Mayor?” asked Charles.

“Sir Geoffrey Boleyn, Anne’s great-grandfather, a retired draper or mercer, who bought this place,” replied his mother.

“You see we have had a draper’s great-granddaughter for our queen, and the French have now a wine merchant’s grand-daughter for their empress; these are some of the romances of life.”

“Poor Anne!” said Laura; “hers was a sad and brief one.”

“Yes!” replied Mrs. Carteret; “taken early from this quiet place, where her girlhood was passed with her governess in comparative seclusion—for Hever, in her day, with its bad roads and large districts of uncleared forest land, must have been tolerably isolated from society—taken from her quiet home and introduced very young into scenes of pleasure and the gaities of the French Court,—when

the death of the Queen, with whom she had remained after her royal mistress, Mary of England, left France, obliged her to come back also; her English beauty and her French refinement and sprightliness made her an object of universal attention and admiration, and life probably seemed to her all that was happy and delightful; and she, perhaps, never thought seriously until she became a mother and a prisoner."

"She inspires," remarked Miss Lloyd, "the same sort of interest as Mary Queen of Scots; one forgets her faults when one remembers her cruel death."

"Beauty and misfortune always carry the day, I am afraid," said Mr. Carteret, "over plain good sense and worth; but it ought not to be so. Let us be above such weakness! Come, young ladies, be a little sentimental about poor Anne of Cleves, who, some say, died here. Pity her! She expected to be queen, poor thing! and though rather portly, was, I doubt not, a very worthy woman."

But every one scouted the idea, and refused to feel any sympathy with Anne of Cleve's misfortunes.

They were standing, whilst they were talking, in the open court, when the farmer's wife came out and offered to show them over the house. With exception, of course, of internal decoration and furniture, it remains much as it was when finished by Anne's father—a castellated house rather than a castle, as it is called. Its plan and form—the quadrangular, admitted of little addition or alteration, encompassed as it was, by a moat, supplied with water from the river Eden, a small neighbouring stream. It must have been a compact, well-built, comfortable residence, easily defended against marauders, large enough for entertainment, yet not too large for every day life. They wandered at their leisure through the old low wainscotted rooms, down the long gallery into the open corridor overlooking the castle bowling green, lingered in Anne Boleyn's rooms, and in the apartment, now modernized, where her namesake, Anne

of Cleves, is said to have died ; and then the impatient girls questioned the good woman of the house about the dark stains on the floor.

"Yes ; she had heard some such a tale, but it happened before she lived there. And, for her part, she thought it a very odd house indeed—such noises as they heard sometimes ; she had been frightened out of her wits when she first lived there, but as no harm had come to her, she didn't much mind it now."

"Rats," suggested Mr. Lloyd.

"Well, it might be rats, or might not be rats, there were plenty of them there, that she knew—they were always getting into the horses' mangers and frightening the poor beasts."

"Well, as ghosts are noiseless beings, or at least supposed to be so, we will conclude the rats are your disturbers," said Mrs. Carteret.

"What sort of noises were they ?" asked Jane.

"All sorts, Miss—heavy steps up and down the gallery all night."

"Rats all over," cried Mr. Lloyd.

"Then groans and sighs, Miss."

"Oh, the old boards creaking, and the wind whistling through the old doors and windows."

"I see, Miss Jane, you are determined to make out the case of a ghost or a murder. I wonder no one ever saw a headless lady walking about in the pale moonlight."

"I suppose that may be seen on the tower green," said Hugh.

"But what is this ?" exclaimed Mrs. Lloyd. "Is this a dagger that I see before me, or a carving knife ? I hope the latter—and that the banquet laid out in this comfortable room is not an apparition but a reality, for I am hungry."

"So am I—and so am I," exclaimed half a dozen others.

"Then I think we had better sit down at once, before the rats get hold of it," said Mr. Carteret.

For a time Anne Boleyn and her misfortunes were forgotten; cold chicken and apple tarts asserted their claims to attention. At last, when nature's demands had been tolerably well satisfied, some one remarked:

"How little of her beauty Anne had transmitted to her daughter Elizabeth. Judging from the portraits of the two, there was hardly a family likeness to be traced."

"Not even as a young girl," said Mrs. Carteret, "could Elizabeth have had much claim to good looks. There is a curious picture of her at Hampton Court, in a red dress, when about seventeen or eighteen years of age; the face is thin, pale, and somewhat prim, and contracted in expression; her hair decidedly red; the eyes small and colourless; and the lips thin and compressed, as in the Tudor race—very unlike indeed, to her mother, with her soft sunny hair and sweet lustrous eyes. Anne's beauty must have been greatly that of expression, as her features were by no means perfect. But one thing she transmitted to her daughter was, an engaging manner. Whilst Anne was the darling of those about her and her equals, Elizabeth was equally beloved by the people—her poorer subjects. She might be haughty to her courtiers, pinch her ladies and box their ears, but to the lower class, when on her progresses, she was ever gracious—receiving petitions in person, and addressing kind words to the people as she passed. I believe myself this was one great reason of her popularity."

"Don't you think, Mamma, that another reason was, her being so thoroughly English?" said Laura, (who piqued herself on being very national). "Mary, who was half a Spaniard, on her mother's side, before she married, and entirely so after, must always have seemed to the people like a foreigner; but Elizabeth had hardly a drop of foreign blood in her veins—indeed none, I think: one must go back to Edward the Third to find any."

"Ah, Laura! I think you may have hit the right nail on the head, but let me hear how you make out your case," said her father.

"Well then, Papa: her mother, Anne Boleyn's English descent, you will not dispute—so I need not trouble myself with that, but may proceed to Henry the Eighth's progenitors. We will begin with Elizabeth of York, his mother,—she was the daughter of an English woman—Elizabeth Woodville. And Edward the Fourth of York, her father, was the son of English parents; so through that grandmother Queen Elizabeth was very English—and equally so through her grandfather Henry the Seventh, for his mother was Margaret Beaufort, John of Gaunt's great-granddaughter, and his father was an English earl—Owen Tudor's and Queen Katharine's son,—ah! I have come to a Frenchwoman at last; but after all, Katharine of France was only Queen Elizabeth's great-great-grandmother—quite far enough off to make that amount of French blood very English; don't you think so, Papa?"

"Yes, I do, my dear; and I think you have proved your case perfectly. Elizabeth was the most English monarch in point of descent that ever sat upon our throne. They say it takes four generations to make a gentleman—and you have given her more than that of pure English blood to dilute the French mixture; so we may claim her as all our own—our English princess, *par excellence*. And truly she was a sovereign, of thoroughly English feeling."

"I am glad to see, Laura, that you have not forgotten your history," said her mother.

"I am very glad you did not put me through the York and Lancaster pedigrees," said Mr. Lloyd. "I think, Miss Carteret, your brothers have both gone off in a fright, lest they should be called upon next. Shall we look at the old bowling green?"



CHAPTER XIV.

THE FOOT-RACE—VIEW FROM THE MOUNT—A KENTISH BALLAD
—THE WEALD AND ITS WEALTH—THE GREEN LANES—THE
HARLBELL—LOST IN THE WOOD.

EDGAR VERYAN and Charles were determined to have their walking match in the long chesnut avenue; so Mr. Carteret agreed to act as umpire; and Mrs. Carteret and the girls settled that they would drive to the Mount and see the winner come in. It was fixed for Wednesday, and Edgar was to come and dine at the farm, that he might be fresh and ready when the time came for starting. Edgar was somewhat of a dandy; and arrived, looking quite cool and neat, in clean white trowsers and a loose tie round his throat.

"Bent upon conquest, I see," said Mr. Carteret.

Laura and Mrs. Carteret smiled as if they thought there was more in that speech than met the ear.

Mr. Price lent Hugh the black pony; and he rode it into the park. Edgar adhered to his proposal of giving Charles five minutes' start, although Mr. Carteret thought it too much. With this law Charles felt confident of reaching the Mount first, and set off at a sharp pace. When the five minutes had expired he seemed to have made a formidable start. Edgar, however, smiled quietly as he said to Mr. Carteret:—

"He won't keep that up long, Sir."

He himself maintained a quiet, steady, uniform pace, never flagging—and seemingly not the least

pressed. Charlie soon began to slacken; and, as he slackened, the distance between him and Edgar perceptibly diminished.

"Is he getting nearer?" he asked Hugh from time to time; and when the latter answered in the affirmative, he plucked up fresh courage and pushed on boldly again. The girls, from the end of the avenue, watched with interest the progress of the match.

"Charlie is a good bit a-head," cried Ada; "and I hope he will win—for Edgar was so conceited about it."

"Oh, I am quite sure he will win!" said Jane. "Look how much in advance he is."

"Not so sure," replied her mother.

"Not so sure, indeed!" said Laura: "Edgar gains fast on Charlie; and as he gave him such a very fair start, I rather hope Edgar will win. Well, Hugh, what do you think?" as Hugh cantered up on his little steed, "Which will win?"

"Oh, Edgar, of course! Look how near he is."

"Yes," said Jane; "but there is a very short length to finish now, and if Charlie keeps up his pace he will do it."

"But he will not keep it up," said Hugh; "when they come to this rising ground, Charlie will be completely blown, while Edgar is just as fresh as ever! Look, they are almost there now! Don't you see how poor Charlie flags? There! there! Edgar is up with him—close! abreast! Now wait a minute—just what I said—he has passed him!—taking it quite easily. Here he is! Here he comes! fresh as a four year old, cool as a cucumber! Crown the victor, ladies! A chaplet of oak leaves will do just as well as a wreath of laurel! Receive the prize, Sir Edgar Vryan, fleet of foot!"

Poor Charles was dreadfully tired; so they all went up to the seat on the Mount, and sat down a

little to rest themselves, whilst they looked at the view opening out below, of the rich, luxuriant, still well wooded Weald of Kent.

"How thick the trees are! from this height it looks quite like a forest," said Laura.

"Which it originally was," said her father. "You are looking now upon what was once the Weald, or great forest wilds of Kent. A broad belt of wood, from seven to thirty miles wide, stretching through Kent and Sussex for a distance of more than a hundred miles."

"Famous hunting ground, I dare say," cried Hugh from his pony.

"Yes; wild boars, red deer, roebucks, pole cats, and foxes, were all to be found in the Weald. Oak trees of fabulous size and age flourished there; and all the rogues, and outlaws, and vagabonds found hiding places in it. And the Kentish men prided themselves upon being as determined and unyielding as their native oaks—even the Conqueror, you remember, was obliged to give in to them. Saxon law still prevails in Kent."

"How did they manage that, Papa? They must have been clever to make William give way to them."

"Have you never heard the old story of the wood which went to meet William as he marched through Kent?"

"No, Papa; do please tell us!" cried all.

There is an old ballad which tells the whole tale—how the men of Kent swore they would not give up their old customs and laws established by Edward the Confessor, for any Norman Duke; and how they all assembled and hid themselves in a great wood near which the Conqueror must pass, and when he and his army came in sight, how every man broke off a large branch, and, carrying it with him, gave their little army the appearance of a moving forest. The Conqueror, surprised at this obstacle, and not knowing how many men might be in ambush, sent to know

what they meant by opposing him, and what they wanted.

"Shall I repeat some of the old ballad to you?"

"Oh, if you please, dear Papa!"

"Unto the Kentishmen he sent,
The cause to understand;
For what intent and for what cause,
They took this war in hand.

To whom they made this short reply,
For liberty we fight—
And to enjoy King Edward's laws,
The which we hold our right.

Then said the dreadful Conqueror,
You shall have what you will—
Your ancient customs and your laws,
So that you will be still.

And each thing else that you will crave,
With reason at my hand;
So you will but acknowledge me
Chief King of fair England.

The Kentishmen agreed thereon,
And laid their arms aside;
And by this means King Edward's law
In Kent doth still abide.

And in no place in England else,
These customs do remain,
Which they, by manly policy,
Did of Duke William gain."

"Thank you, Papa; the story reminds one of Macbeth and the battle of Dunsinane," said Jane.

"It must have taken a great many years to clear off so much forest land," remarked Edgar.

"Not so many as you might think," replied Mr. Carteret. "At first the Weald was cleared here and there in patches by the peasantry, just as the great woods of America have been cleared by the settlers

there; and they took possession and held undisputed the ground thus reclaimed. However, about the thirteenth century the Weald was divided into districts and parishes, and in 1500 and 1600 there was such a wholesale cutting down of trees that the Government began to think there would be no oaks left for ship building. So, you see, the work of destruction, when once it begins, is a very different thing from the work of construction. It did not take many years to cut down the monster trees that had taken so many hundreds to grow."

"But what, Papa, caused so much wood to be cut just then?" asked the inquiring Jane.

"It was principally cut down and burnt for charcoal. And the charcoal was required for heating the furnaces, which at this period were scattered through the Weald of Sussex, for smelting the iron ore found there in large quantities. You know what charcoal is—for you saw Mr. Price preparing some for heating his oast-house with when the hops want drying. You know that it is wood half burnt, or charred. You saw the wood after being cut up, built into a little stack, and then well covered over with earth, and turf, and charcoal dust, and then set fire to."

"Oh yes," said Charles; "it went on burning for two days at least—and then the men covered the heap all over again, and so smothered the fire; and the pieces of wood came out afterwards as black as coal, only very light and brittle."

"Exactly so," said his father. "In some of the large forests of Southern Germany you may now see precisely the same sort of scene your forefathers witnessed in the Weald. After riding miles perhaps, through the wood, without meeting a soul, you suddenly come on the solitary huts and kilns of the charcoal burners—wretched looking habitations they are, and the men as black as their own coal. In the dusk of the evening they have something the appearance of demons in the gloomy forest."

"Like the gnomes or elfs of the German fairy tales," suggested Mrs. Carteret.

"I really quite long to see one of these German forests—with their foresters, and their wood chapels, and their charcoal burners," said Laura.

"Well, my dear," replied her father, "who knows but that one day we may spend a summer in the German's Fatherland."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Jane and Laura.

"But now," said Mrs. Carteret, "if you want to wander through the green lanes, we must be going: before, however, taking leave of the Weald, don't let us forget that some part of it gave birth to a very useful Kentishman—no less a person than Caxton the printer."

"Indeed!" said Jane; "then England owes a great deal to Kent—for Archbishop Bouchier, you know, Mamma, Mr. Roberts told us, had a great deal to do with introducing printing."

"I think Kent may well be proud—the first printer and first protestant queen being of Kentish origin," said Laura.

A short drive from the Mount brought them to Riverhill, where by the road side stand seven oaks—the somewhat unworthy successors of the seven large oaks which first gave the town its name. They had a delightful drive over what is called the Common, but which more resembles partially cleared woods—thickets, rugged heathery ground, clothed with furze, brambles, and broom, and groups, and clumps of fine old forest trees varying the scene. Ever and anon, as they skirted the brow of the hill, distant and beautiful views opened out before them; and the proximity of several gentlemen's well kept, trim seats, added a new and charming feature to the whole scene. At last, leaving the unenclosed common land, they drove through many a narrow lane between plantations and woods. It was in one of these woods that the foxgloves in June had been so

splendid; their large showy flowers were so thick that the whole wood had appeared quite rose-coloured. Ada, forgetting how time sped, was greatly disappointed when they approached this spot to find their beauty over.

"Why, my dear child," said her father, "you did not expect that the foxgloves would remain in flower until now, on purpose for me to see them."

"We must content ourselves with harebells and heather, of which there are plenty," said Mrs. Carteret. "The harebells seem to go on flowering all the year round here. It is a lovely little flower—a species of *companula*; the Scotch call it the blue-bell—a name we give to our wild hyacinth. You remember the Lady of the Lake says:—

‘This little flower that loves the lea,
Might well my simple emblem be;
And when I place it in my hair,
Allan, a lard is bound to swear,
He ne’er saw coronal more fair.’

But shall we get out here, and walk through this inviting green lane to the other side of the wood? the carriage can drive round and meet us there."

This proposal met with universal approbation. The drives and rides through these woods and plantations were very numerous; this one the Carteret family had more than once traversed, when the girls were hunting for wild strawberries and rare ferns—and even wild raspberries, which, to their great surprise and delight, they one day found in delicious profusion in a hedgerow.

Edgar Vervan was anxious to find a fern large enough to admit of his cutting the stalk in a particular way, near the root, when he assured Laura the exact portrait of Charles the First would be seen. They were not exactly in a fern region, plentiful as ferns in general were all over the common and in the woods. Ada, who was with them, was eager

to find a suitable one—and thus they were running here and there looking for a large fern and cutting them, until Laura remarked that the rest of the party had got quite out of sight, and that they had better follow. After walking some little time, and not coming up to their party, they redoubled their pace; but still no signs of the rest.

"Surely," said Laura, suddenly standing still, "we cannot by any chance have taken a wrong turn. I have been this way often before, and this looks like the right road."

"Oh, we're all right, I dare say," said Edgar; "I'll give a halloo, and then they'll hear us."

"Hillo! halloo! halloo!" cried Edgar at the top of his voice; but no one responded.

"We are certainly lost," said Laura; "and how it has happened I can't tell. I don't remember turning one way or the other. Ada, you look as if you were going to cry! don't be so foolish."

"Cry!" said Edgar; "we are all too old to be babes in the wood. Besides, of course, I can take care of you."

"The question is," said Laura, "what shall we do? go backwards, or forwards?"

"Better go back, I should say," said Edgar, "till we find the right path again."

So they retraced their steps until they came to what they fancied was the path they were originally on, and then turned into it with confidence.

"Of course," said Laura, "they will wait for us. I dare say we shall meet Hugh on his pony in a minute or two, coming to look for us."

"I hope we shall get there soon," said Ada; "for it seems a long way. I am getting very tired."

"Ah! there is the gate and the road!" exclaimed Laura.

But how her face fell when on reaching it she discovered it was not the road—not the gate, she wanted.

"What shall we do, Edgar? I don't the least know where we are."

"It's awkward," said he, "for its getting late; and I don't know where we are either. But here's a man coming, that's lucky; let us ask him."

The man, a labourer returning home from his work, was not very bright; but at last he made out from Laura's description where they wanted to go to.

"Law, Miss, you're a mile and a half fra' there—or rayther two mile, I should say."

Pleasant news this, indeed. What should they do.

"Go back through the wood," suggested Edgar.

But this Laura prudently declined, suggesting that they might lose themselves again, and thus make matters worse than ever. The question was, should they walk to the gate they first entered by, which was a mile and a half off by the road—or should they walk two miles to the gate the carriage was waiting at, by another road? After some deliberation, Laura decided for the first plan, because she thought it most likely that as soon as they were missed Mr. Carteret would return to the starting point to see what had become of them.

Ada nearly cried at the prospect of so long a walk; but bore up, encouraged by Edgar's good temper and Laura's good sense. They trudged along, thinking the road would never end. The labourer went with them some distance to see that they took the right turn; and as every thing must have an end, their walk came to an end too. Again they reached the place where they had entered the wood; and just as they got there the carriage drove up, to the great satisfaction of every one.

After talking the matter all over, and trying to account for the mistake, Mrs. Carteret said:

"I advise you, Laura, in future, to note down, 'Beware of short cuts.'"



CHAPTER XV.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT WILD FLOWERS.

WHAT happy thoughts, what pleasant memories, the very name of wild flowers brings with it—taking us back to our very earliest years; our first impressions, and, perhaps, our keenest, freshest pleasures, are associated with these lovely children of nature. Every year of our young life finds its similitude, or type, in the months as they come and go. The daisies, buttercups, and primroses of young April, are the cherished pets of our infancy; or April season of life, when smiles and tears, like the sunshine and showers, succeed each other, coming quickly, passing away as soon—the sun shining through the light shower, the shower cloud scarce veiling the noonday sun.

When we see a young child running happily along the lanes, or in the fields, picking every flower within reach, who among us is not reminded of the days when it was their ambition to make the largest daisy chain that could be made? or of the time when they delighted to find out that Papa or Mamma, or nurse, loved butter better than they did, by the test of the buttercup under the chin. Who does not remember, when we were a little older, laughing at a younger brother or sister, for picking dandelions and nipping off the daisies without stalks. This daisy—the day's-eye, as the poet calls it—is the very darling of flowers, coming early, staying late. A pearl among flowers, indeed :

a Marguerite, as the French call it; a herald of summer, of sunny hours; a plaything for the rich and poor, the prince and the pauper; for those who have everything, and those who lack all things.

Shall we take a long walk together, dear young reader, through wood and meadow-land, over moors, and down into shady glades, and pick a nosegay of wild flowers together, for every month in the year? Do not put our pale and fragile wild flowers near their brilliant rivals of the garden or hot houses. Many of these are foreigners, acclimatized, it is true—dear to us now perhaps, as the children of our own soil, but not, consequently, so universally known—not so entirely our own, to pick and to have, when we will and where we will, as our field and hedge-row pets. To many they are like the costly silk or rich satin, beyond their reach, and nearly useless if procured, requiring the other adjuncts of wealth and of attendance, to thrive and prosper. But our own native flowers are pretty annual gifts of Flora to those, at least, who love her well and admire her charms. To this, happily large class, including every innocent child, she is profusely generous; but for the careless and indifferent, she has no favours; for them her primroses grow pale—her wild roses become thorns.

But now let us hurry away to the Surrey lanes, or Kentish woods; it is the end of April, a warm and early spring, and every hedge-row and copse are blooming with primroses. We bring bunch after bunch home in triumph—their large green leaves are fresh and brilliant, their perfume is most delicately fresh, it seems at once the emblem of purity and simplicity. The wood anemone, too, with its large indented leaves, and delicately veined, white bell-shaped blossom, is hanging its head, bending to every gentle breeze. We must line our basket with a little wet grass, or damp moss, if we would carry any of them home with us, for the heat of the hand soon withers this tender little



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flower. In another week we shall have a still greater treasure to hunt for, and a hunt it is at first,—the sweet-scented violet, (*viola odorata*) hides its purple and white flowers under its leaves, and then betrays itself by its delicious perfume.

There are no leaves yet upon the hedges; but the black thorn has put forth its white starry flowers, the long thorns, however, make it troublesome to pick, so we will content ourselves with admiring it at a distance. As we go home with our violets, we see some village children searching diligently, low down in the hedge row, for something. One girl cries out: "I have found one! now guess, is it a lord or a lady?" And she holds up, what we know to be the common arum; but the large green leaf or spathe, which in a few days would have unfolded, and displayed the tall fleshy stem inside, is now twisted tightly round it; and the village girl begins to peel this off. If this spike, for I know not how to call this strange flower, and I am not giving a botanical lecture, and so need not describe it in technical terms—if this fleshy spike, inside, is of a dark brown, or mulberry colour, the children call it a lord, if a pale pink or yellow, a lady.

To console us for the primroses, which, in May, are fading away, the fields become yellow with cowslips, the hedge-rows purple with the early orchis; what a splendid nosegay the two make together!—a handful of orchises, with a few of their fresh leaves in the centre, surrounded by a circlet of golden-eyed yellow cowslips. No one can resist a cowslip, there is something in its perfume that seems to belong exclusively to the country. How the sight of them recalls the days when we made cowslip balls, by breaking off the long stems, and tying little bunches of flowers close together, and then literally pelted each other with flowers; the cowslip tea, which no one could drink; or the cowslip wine, which the farmer's wife made, and which was the greatest luxury and treat in the

world to us. Sometimes we came across a flower so much larger in size, and fuller in colour, that we called it an oxslip; and then some one would sing:

“I know a bank whereon the wild thyme grows,
Where oxslips and the nodding violet blows.”

Oh, we remember a happy day, spent on a bank, which tradition says, is the very bank the poet sang about,—Scaw Bank, a high and sudden slope down to the river Avon, not far from Charlecote and Hampton, Lucy, and many an other haunt of Shakespeare's early days. We went, a party of happy merry school girls, to while away an Easter holiday. It was sunny and warm, as Spring sometimes graciously is, and we walked and talked leisurely enough, until we reached the spot we had come to see, and found, not the oxslip—it was too early for that, or for the wild thyme, but a carpet, literally a carpet of flowers, primroses and violets. We walked upon them, we sat upon them, we could not help it; and the breeze was really a balmy breeze, scented with violets. Long we sat, and sang, and talked, and laughed; and longer might we have lingered on that delicious bank, but a sudden scream from one of the party startled us all. A young girl seeing a movement amongst the leaves and flowers beside her, had turned to look for the cause of this, and had almost put her hand upon an adder, stealing along with its writhing motion. So, good bye to Scaw Bank, and away to the dell, another pretty spot near the soft flowing Avon, to hunt for orchises (a common kind enough), with purple blossom, and black spotted leaves; but valuable, because orchises were rare in that part of the world. We had no chalk hills near us, and so no strange, odd, bee-shaped, fly-shaped, lizard-like flowers; but hundreds of other little beauties,—the speedwell, *veronica* is its other pretty name, was one for instance. We cannot gather it on a dry day, for its little blue petals drop off

as soon as touched ; but we will go out after a shower, and those flowers, not scattered by the rain, pluck and take home. Its blue rival, the forget-me-not, comes later. What is this little white flower, growing in circlets round an upright stem, and smelling exactly like new mown hay? It is the sweet scented woodruff. May floweret, the Germans call it ; and on the Rhine and the banks of the blue Moselle, they make a delicious cool beverage of Moselle, Rhine wine, lemon, and other good ingredients, and steep a handful of these pretty flowerets in the cup, which impart something of their flavour to the whole ; and then the Germans call it Mai-trink, May-cup, or May-drink. How the mention of this May-flower, or woodruff, awakens a host of happy spring recollections of Germany as well as England. How we wish we could transport a group of English children, with their hands full of cowslips and dog-violets, pretty but scentless, into the fields and plains of Southern Germany in May, and watch their delight at seeing the large, bell-shaped flowers of the deepest blue, that literally cover the ground. These are gentians—there are two varieties of them, a large and small kind, but both of the intensest blue. They are, indeed, a contrast to our paler, more delicate blossoms ; but in the woods, both of Germany and England, we shall find a common favourite for our monthly nosegay—the lily of the valley—that rare combination of beauty of form and of perfume. And as June advances, we shall find, in the hedge-rows of both countries, the wild rose and the honeysuckle.

But our English May gives us the sweet-scented hyacinth, the blue bell, and sometimes a jonquil, for our wild-flower nosegay. The Scotch blue bell is our delicate little harebell, with its slender wiry stem, which is perhaps more profuse in Kent than in any other county of England, coming into flower early, and blooming late. With what numbers of flowers we can mix it for our bouquets,—with heather, with

the silver weed, or yellow potentilla, with all the labiate tribe, with the dark blue buglos, and the wild geranium, or ragged robin, as children call it.

But May must pass away, with its hawthorn and wild cherry, and sloe blossoms in the hedges, and its cowslips and ladies' smock in the fields; and June comes with its steadier and greater heat, and brings out white orchises smelling sweet, which we carry home, and place in water, but find them too strong for our room; and saxifrages, and pink bind weeds, and large white twining convolvulus, wild roses, and the honeysuckle, which our village children sally forth to find, prizing it all the more for being a garden flower; and, best of all, the foxglove. How handsome these last flowers look in a tall glass by themselves, mixed with fresh green leaves. We must have a bouquet of these, as long as they last, on the hall table or sideboard.

But come we now to bright July, the mid-period of the floral year, representing the mid-period of our early days—childhood, between infancy and youth. We have bid good bye to the butter cups and daisies of life, we want something striking, attractive. The gay colours that Nature's favourites wear this month enchant us. What a brilliant handful the lanes and fields afford us—the yellow chrysanthemum, the blue corn flower, the poppy, the purple corn cockle, the white starry flower, some call a bachelor's button; and if these are not enough, let us be off to Bavaria, near the mountains, there we shall find *complanatus*—the large ones we call the Canterbury bells—and a tall lily, not quite so large, but just the same as our garden tiger lily; and when we get home, hot and tired, let us refresh ourselves with an iced cup, as good as the German's May drink, and steep in it the blue and rough-leaved flower that we found in our own fields—the Borage—"Borage gives courage,"—well, we want courage for a long country walk

in August or September. Let us go slowly, gently along; we are too old now to tear our dresses in the copse wood, or leave our shoes behind us in a ditch, as we did in June, when picking wild strawberries in the woods, or gathering foxgloves in the hedge-rows. We care no longer for the gay and gaudy flower of midsummer, but look lovingly down upon the scarlet pimpernel, the shepherd's hour glass, closing before coming rain, and opening out again in fine weather;— and we pick a bunch of the wild hearts-case or pansy, growing freely in the corn-fields, the sweet-smelling mints from off the moor, and the purple and pink varieties of heath; and we search one day diligently, but in vain, for a white heath and a white harebell, for they recall some happy days and fresh breezes on Scotch hills, where they were found; and where that flower, which gives such strange delight to the Southern child of the plains, was first beheld—the flower of Parnassus. The oldest person coming upon a quantity of these blooming in a bed of soft green moss, would hail them with the same sensation of excitement that the Alpine traveller does the rosy red rhododendron, the Alpine rose; the flowers, when gathered, conveys no idea of their beauty and their value, to the comparatively waste and dreary region where they grow. It was as we contemplated, a mountain-side covered with the last-named plants, brilliant in the noon-day sun, giving life and beauty to an otherwise cheerless scene, that we felt we could understand the enthusiasm of the Swedish botanist, Linnæus, who, beholding the golden splendour of our English gorse for the first time, knelt down and thanked God for the sight. But to return to the two last months, what other flowers shall we bring home for our table? the meadow sweet, the willow herb, or the tall purple lythrum? Yes; all these; but let us take some of this St. John's wort, too, for we want a little yellow in our bouquet. It is very hot—time was when we should have made parasols of

fern leaves, but now every one wears a hat, so we leave the large varieties of these beautiful plants undisturbed, only picking now and then a leaf of a smaller, rarer kind. Had it been July, we might have found some raspberries in the hedge-row, perhaps; and if we fly off to Switzerland or the Tyrol now, half way up some of the wooded hills, in the thicket, we shall find plenty—delicious are these wild raspberries. How grateful we were one day, when, after a long and fatiguing ascent, we found we had lost our way, and were as distant as ever from the Alps, and the hut of the sennar, or shepherd, and no prospect of a draught of milk, and no sign of a drop of water. How delicious were the raspberries then, how plentiful! how highly flavoured!

But we are pushing on, spring and summer, infancy and childhood are gone by, the seed month,—the new age must give us something more. Flowers will not content us, we must taste and enjoy. We pluck the branches of ripe nuts, and the bramble or blackberry. We admire them, keep them a short time; and then, cracking the nut for the sake of the kernel, and tasting the berry, find out this truth, that all pleasures are greater in anticipation, than in fulfilment. The empty shell, the fruitless stalk, are thrown aside, and with them, perchance, the keen relish and zest of early days; for the rest of the year, for the rest of life, we must make our wreaths and our bouquets of tasteless berries, or autumn's varied changing leaves. Yet these are beautiful—the sombre browns and darks of Nature's decay, blend with the lingering green of life and summer, and take a hundred shades of crimson or of gold; but this beauty, like the glow at close of day, is rapid in its flight, sudden in its departure, and leaves the face of Nature, grey, cold, and bare.

Farewell, sweet wild-flowers: December appears. Dear young reader, we began by comparing the floral year to the period of our youth alone, but it may,

and does, typify the whole of life. Cherish your early days. Fill the store house of your memory with every flower you can cull; so that when you have passed the prime—the summer time of life, when you have reaped the harvest, and gathered the fruits of autumn, you may have something left to brighten the dreary November hours. You cannot look forward, then, to a renewal of the freshness of feeling, and careless happiness of youth. The flowers of life will spring again, 'tis true, but not for you. Look back, then—open the doors of memory's store-house. In gazing on the bright pictures she has painted, you see the past in even fairer colours than it really wore. You will feel a child's affection again for the daisy and primrose of spring; and though the colours of the pictures may grow fainter, as you grow older, these thoughts will be the sunbeams that brighten your December, and keep your mind from becoming a colourless blank, just as the sun, by thawing the snow as it falls, preserves the face of Nature from wearing an aspect of cold and dreary uniformity.





CHAPTER XVI.

HUGH'S PRESENT—A REPTILE'S REPAST—PENSURST AND SIR PHILIP SIDNEY—THE HOUSE AND HALL—SIDNEY'S SISTER—ALGERNON SIDNEY—THE EARLY BIRD—SEVEN OAKS COMMON—BLACKBERRIES AND FERNS—TEA IN THE WOOD—A GIPSY—LIFE IN THE CAMP.

"I HAVE got a present for you, Jane," said Hugh Carteret, one morning as he entered the large sitting room, where the whole family were quietly and busily occupied, with the exception of himself and Charles, who seemed to consider their holidays as specially dedicated to idleness.

"A present, dear Hugh; who from?—yourself?—how kind! What is it?"

"Something for the conservatory."

"A plant of some sort?" said Jane, jumping up.

"Where is it?"

"No, not a plant—something useful, interesting and curious; but not, perhaps, what you would consider beautiful."

"Not a plant! What can it be? Not a besom, watering-can, flower-pot, or garden scissors—so curious. I can't imagine what it is? Do tell me, Hugh?"

"I begin to be curious too," said Mr. Carteret, looking up from a letter he was writing, for he half suspected Hugh was going to play his sister some trick. "Where is your treasure, Hugh?"

"In the conservatory."

"Then do let us go and see it?" said Ada, jumping up, too.

"Come along then," said her father, "we will all go together."

Laufa and Mrs. Carteret were too intent upon their own occupation to move; so Mr. Carteret, Ada, Jane, Charles, and Hugh, moved off together. They soon reached the little conservatory, which, by this time, thanks to Mrs. Veryan's geraniums, and Jane's fostering care, looked quite gay again, and Jane glanced eagerly round; but soon exclaimed—

"Well, Hugh, I see nothing new here."

"My curiosity is under that large flower-pot, on the window sill," answered Hugh.

"Suppose then, Hugh, you uncover your treasure yourself," said his father.

Hugh went forward, took up the flower-pot in his hand, and displayed, what caused Ada to start back from him in a fright, and Jane to denounce, as—

"A horrid toad! Oh, Hugh, how could you be so ridiculous, when you know I have such an aversion for frogs and toads; and pray, what use is your 'curious, interesting, but not beautiful, present' to me—pray take it away as fast as you can—nasty creature."

"Stop, Jane, don't be in too great a hurry, this poor toad may be useful to you," said her father, laughing; "I know that gardeners would rather encourage him amongst their cucumber beds, or strawberry beds, or pop him into their pineapple frame, to keep them free from insects."

"Exactly," said Hugh. "Here was Jane complaining the other day of the place being overrun with earwigs; and I bring her an individual who will soon clear them off for her, and she refuses to accept his services because he is ugly."

"I must really apologize to you, or to the toad; I did not know that he could be so useful," said Jane; "I did not know he was going to eat up the still more horrid earwigs."

"If you doubt it, would you like to see him eat an earwig?"

"Not particularly, thank you. I really do not care to see one horrid creature eat up another."

"But you do not know what a curious sight it is," persisted Hugh. "I have been watching this fellow all this morning, and supplying him with the delicacy; and though I have been as attentive as possible, I have never been able to find out how he manages to get the earwig into his mouth—it's magic, really—he doesn't touch the earwig, but all of a sudden poor wiggee is gone, and you see the toad swallowing something."

"Nonsense, Hugh. What do you mean?"

"Nonsense, indeed; just see for yourself. I'll get an earwig. Any one here, get one? Charlie, just look for one amongst these creepers?"

Immediately Charles and Ada set to work to hunt for earwigs; but, curiously enough, not one could they find.

"I am sure," said Charles, "they must know that there is a toad here, waiting to eat them up."

"Run," said Hugh to him, "to where the dahlias are; you will be sure to find some in one of the flower-pots, just on the top of the dahlia sticks."

Charles ran off, and soon returned with his prize.

"Now," said Hugh, "don't, please, frighten my toad. I will drop this earwig down upon the leaf in front of him, but not near enough for the toad to touch him without moving. There, now it is done. Look! the toad has not stirred, but has fixed his eye upon the earwig, who seems in an awful fright—can't move for fear."

"How very odd," exclaimed Jane.

"Why does not the earwig run away?" asked Ada.

"Either it can't," said her father, "or it feels that it is safe while it is still. It is very like a cat and mouse—the cat does not spring till the mouse begins to move."

"Now, please, watch," said Hugh. "I daresay the earwig will begin to move soon, and then he is done for. The toad never stirs at all, and yet, somehow, he catches his prey."

They all watched attentively for some little time, neither toad nor earwig stirred. At last, the latter began to move a little bit; then, most extraordinary to relate, a sort of clucking or gulping noise was heard—no one could detect the slightest movement on the part of the toad, but the earwig had disappeared, and was evidently in the toad's throat, by the swallowing movement it made.

"That was a very curious proceeding, I must say," remarked Mr. Carteret.

"I told you so," said Hugh, triumphantly. "I assure you, I have watched, and watched in vain, to see if the toad puts out his tongue, or how he does it, and I cannot find out."

"Most probably the earwig is drawn in," said Mr. Carteret. "I should imagine the toad has a great power of inhaling and exhaling air; however, I must see this proceeding again before I decide."

After this exhibition, the ugly toad was suffered to remain in the conservatory, and generally got a visit from the two boys after breakfast, who seemed bent on discovering its feeding process, but without success. Jane, however, declined being present at their investigations; and said, if he would eat up her earwigs in private, he was welcome to do so, by any method of his own most agreeable to himself; but, for her part, she felt alarmed, lest he should

fix his toad's eye upon her and swallow her up too."

It was now the end of August. Charles' holidays were come to an end; but it was settled he should remain at home another week, in order that he might be of the party to Penshurst, and Mr. Roberts' long talked of tea party in the woods. An early day was fixed upon for the former expedition; and Ada was to spend the day at the Rectory, for she was too young to profit by, or enjoy this sort of thing, and not quite equal to the fatigue of it.

The rest of the party drove early to the Tunbridge Town Station, where, taking the railway, they soon arrived at Penshurst.

They determined to go over the house first, and then, as the day was so fine, to spend the rest of their time in strolling about the park. The old grey house, with its irregularities, battlements, and high-pitched roofs, pleased them much; less stately than Knole, it had on that sunny day, a pleasant home look, combined with a certain sort of antique magnificence. Royal visitors—Queen Elizabeth and James I.—had honoured Penshurst with their visits; but it is as the home of the Sidneys—the good Sir Henry, the great Sir Philip, the unfortunate Algernon, that we view it with interest, especially as the birthplace of Philip Sidney, that peerless English knight, who died too soon for his country; but not before he had made his name great in his own great age, and left his memory as an inheritance to posterity, showing the possibility of uniting the courage of the soldier, the accomplishments of the courtier, and the fancy of the poet, with the virtues of a Christian. He was as dear to his Queen, country, and friends, as to his own relations; and all seemed to feel that pride, unmixed with jealousy, in his reputation, that springs only from the purest affection. The most distinguished men of his own time esteemed it an honour to style themselves his friend; and if the

envious voice of detraction ever was raised against him, it was too faint and unfounded to survive its utterance. His own father said of him: "He hath the most virtues that I have ever found in any man;" and later writers, after impartial examination of his character, have confirmed the parent's verdict. Sir Philip Sidney, either as a school boy of twelve, full of promise and diligence—or again, as a young man at the university, or when travelling, and in the prime of life—whether at Court, at home, or abroad—is a pattern for all generations, a model of manly virtue, and of a truthful, self-forgetting, loving, generous character.

Whilst talking about him, they approached the house, made up, as we have before said, of additions, alterations, and improvements, from the fourteenth century to the present day. Before entering the banqueting hall, the oldest part of Penshurst now remaining, Mr. Carteret stopped his children, and said to them:

"I have brought you all here to-day, not only to gratify the natural curiosity that you might feel about the home of such men as Philip and Algernon Sidney, but because I think it improving and useful for you to see old places like this; it enables you to form a better idea than mere description can, of the habits and customs of at least one class of our forefathers. The old halls, such as you have seen at Knole, and will see here, where gentle and simple dined together, convey to you at sight an impression of magnificence and rude simplicity combined; and you can at once understand how, in such a room as this which we are now entering, the lord and lady of the house might eat with their servants, and yet preserve as great, if not greater, state and style than now."

"Yes," said Laura, "I understand that, and this also, that as long as these old halls were used for such purposes, every class must have had much the same hours. All England must have dined at one time,

instead of at half a dozen different hours, as now."

"Exactly," replied her father. "It is just such observations and reflections that I want you to make. The next point that would naturally suggest itself to you is, when these hours changed, and when this family habit of dining together died out. Now, that will be an amusement for you to discover at home; and when once you have looked it up for yourself, you will not forget it."

"I should imagine," remarked Jane, "that English habits must have undergone a great change in Charles the Second's reign. I daresay he brought a great many foreign fashions home with him."

"I shall not tell you," answered Mr. Carteret, smiling; "but leave you and Laura to look it up yourselves."

"But what is this?" said Hugh, as they advanced to the centre of the fine old hall; "the fire-place is in the middle of the room. Where was the chimney, I wonder?"

"No chimney was required," said his father: "the smoke ascended as it liked, and escaped through the roof, which you can see is sufficiently open to allow of its passing away. This octagon shaped place was the hearth; and this immense iron dog, or brand iron, was only wanted to support the large logs of wood with which they made their fires in these days; for wood was cheaper than coal then, owing to the expense and difficulty of carriage."

"Our ancestors must have been accustomed to endure much more cold than we do," said Laura. "I should be sorry to dine in this hall now, on Christmas day, with nothing but a wood fire to warm it, be the logs ever so large."

At the lower end of the hall, was the music, or minstrels' gallery; and below it, a screen of carved wood work, forming a passage which, in former times, led to the kitchens, pantries, and domestic offices.

At the upper end, was the daïs, or raised platform, such as they had observed at Knole, where the nobles and their friends sat; and close by the daïs was a door, leading to the cellars, a convenient arrangement for the master of the house, who could send his page for a fresh supply of ale or wine for his own table at any moment. The great hall in those days was not only the dining place, but the lounging room for idle retainers, and comers and goers on matters of business—the common room, in fact, of the inferior part of the household. The ladies had their women in their own rooms, and their pages and serving men in the antechambers; but all the rest were expected to be within call in the great hall, there being no bells in those days.

All this, Mr. and Mrs. Carteret explained to their children, and pointed out also the different badges of the noble families who had possessed Penshurst, or were related to its owners.

“Of course,” said Mrs. Carteret, “the first owners bore the name of the place. The family of Pencester probably gave their name to the house, and Pencester’s Place, or Castle, is now corrupted to Penshurst; after them came the Devereux family, one of whom built this hall; and then some other family, before it became the property of the Sidneys, in Edward the Sixth’s reign. There, you see, is the bear and ragged staff of the Dudley family. Sir Henry Sidney, Philip’s father, married a Dudley.”

They lingered long in the old hall, one of the largest of its date now standing in England, the sun shone brightly in through the high arched windows, and here and there glanced on an old suit of armour, suspended from the wall; and when they had examined the old dining tables, still remaining, and wondered at their narrow width, they passed up a staircase on the right of the daïs, and entered a suite of fine old apartments, full of portraits, which soon attracted their attention.

All were eager and anxious to find out Sir Philip's, which the attendant told them was in the further room, called Queen Elizabeth's room. So they passed rather hurriedly through the stately ball-room, and through the pages' room, until they reached this apartment, furnished with a number of old high-backed chairs, in needlework and satin—a present from the Queen, and said to have been worked by her and her ladies. All agreed that the general aspect of these rooms, old and deserted as they were, was lighter, pleasanter, and more habitable, than those at Knole.

The attendant now pointed out Sir Philip's picture. It represented him at the age of two or three and twenty, in a crimson dress, with armour.

"I am disappointed," said Laura, as she looked at it, "with all his virtues and accomplishments, he ought to have been handsome to have been quite perfect; and if this picture is like, he could not have been so."

"Certainly not," said Jane. "Do you see, he had red hair?—a hero with red hair, indeed!"

"General Wolfe had red hair; and he was a hero, I am sure," cried Charles.

"That he was," said Mr. Carteret; "but, young ladies, I do not agree with you, Sir Philip's hair is not red, only of a reddish hue—a reddish brown, in fact."

"I do not dislike the colour; at any rate, in a picture," replied Laura; "and I am willing to allow that there is much to dwell upon in the face; the eyes are very earnest and pure in their expression, the brow lofty and calm; but all that does not make him handsome. I wonder if his hair really was that colour—artists take such liberties sometimes."

The attendant here said, that the colour of the hair, as represented in the picture, was known to be correct, because a lock of it was preserved in the house, and was precisely the same shade and hue.

"That is satisfactory, at any rate," said Mrs. Carteret; "because, if correct in one thing, the artist probably was so in others, and this portrait may give us a tolerably faithful impression of the English Petrarch, as Raleigh called him; and as I look at it, it appears to me to be the face of one capable of everything good, especially of the last self-denying action of his life."

"What was that, mother?" asked Hugh.

"A story told of him by his great friend, Lord Brooke, that, when wounded at the battle of Zutphen, and suffering dreadfully from thirst, a draught of water was brought to him—he was just about to drink it, when observing a poor dying soldier near him look wistfully at it, he took the water from his own parched lips, and giving it to his fellow-sufferer, said: "He has more need of it than I." This always appeared to me a beautiful close to an exemplary life, for he died very shortly after, in consequence of this wound."

"Oh, Mamma," exclaimed all, "that was, indeed, great and noble. What a kind heart he must have had."

"And here," continued Mrs. Carteret, "is the portrait of Sidney's sister."

"Whose epitaph, I remember, Ben Jonson wrote," said Laura.

'Sidney's sister—Pembroke's mother—
Death, 'ere thou hast slain another,
Learn'd and fair, and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee.'

"Is it not so, Mamma?"

"I believe you have repeated it correctly, my dear. This Countess of Pembroke seems to have been a very charming and highly-educated person, devotedly attached to her brother, whose tastes and her own were very similar. She wrote several poems, and religious pieces; and, with her brother, put the psalms in verse. And Sir Philip, you know, wrote a

long poem, called the 'Arcadia.' It contains many fine thoughts, and beautiful descriptions of nature and scenery; but the taste of the age is altered, and those who read it now, find it tedious and uninteresting."

"I wonder he had time, with all he had to do in the way of travelling and fighting, and being ambassador, to write at all," said Jane.

"The Arcadia was written here, when he was obliged, for a time, to retire from court, and in this quiet and somewhat solitary place, he passed his time in such pursuits."

"And now we come to his descendant, Algernon Sidney," said Mr. Carteret.

"Who was a great patriot, was he not?" said Hugh.

"According to some people, yes;" said his father. "According to others, only a sincere, but mistaken man; and, certainly, not worthy to be ranked with such great men as Hampden."

"What a stern, dark, melancholy-looking face," said Jane. "I see the word 'Libertas,' written on the book beside him, and behind is an axe, and in the distance, surely the Tower of London."

"Allusions to his fate," said her mother. "This picture must, therefore, have been painted after his death; for you may remember he was executed."

The attendant told them the picture was a copy from another they would see latter.

"Who was Algernon Sidney, Papa?" asked Charles. "Do tell me something about him?"

"Well, my dear, to begin, he was what you can learn here—a gentleman by birth, a member of this old English family, who lived in the reign of Charles II., and was of the few men then left in England, who regretted the days of the Commonwealth, and longed for a return to that form of government. He imagined it impossible for a people to be free under a

monarchy; in short, he was what we call a strong Republican."

"But what was he beheaded for, Papa? not, I suppose, for being a Republican only?"

"Not for that only, my dear; but as his strong opinions, openly expressed, had something to do with his unhappy end, in that sense he may be looked upon as something of a political martyr."

"I thought it was the Ryehouse Plot that was the cause of his death," said Jane.

"You are right, my dear, it was the actual cause. Algernon was concerned, with Lord William Russell and several others, in what was called the Ryehouse Plot, so named from a lonely house in the country, where the conspirators met. It is difficult to say exactly what the object of these men was; but according to the evidence of a conspirator, who confessed the plot, one of their plans was to seize and destroy the King and royal family, and establish a republican form of government. Algernon Sidney and Lord William Russell were arrested, tried, and condemned to death. The trials were very irregular, and the evidence against Sidney so incomplete, that, perhaps, had it not been for the well-known violence of his opinions, his sentence might have been remitted. Charles II. would not, however, hear of leniency, saying: 'If I do not have his life, he will soon have mine.' And when we remember that Sidney justified Charles the First's death, and called it a 'glorious event,' the King was, perhaps, right in his surmise. In that manner, you see, Sidney's opinions partly contributed to his own destruction. He was a mistaken man—mistaken in supposing that an individual is justified in endeavouring to shake, or set aside, the established government of a kingdom, by violent measures of his own, in order to substitute what he may consider a purer and better rule. When a nation rises, and the feeling of the people is all but unanimous, as in 1688, the case is differ-

ent; but bad as Charles the Second's government was, corrupt as was public morality, the country had no desire to change it for a Republic. Algernon Sidney represented no large influential body in the country, and, indeed, seems to have gone beyond his fellow-conspirators in his views; but he was thoroughly sincere in his convictions, and actuated by no desire of self-advancement, he was thoroughly disinterested in that respect."

"I am glad of that," said Laura; "for I have always fancied Algernon Sidney was a great character, and do not like to renounce my early predilections."

"We never do," said her father; "but try not to be prejudiced upon historical questions, because, as you grow older and read more, you will find many of your early impressions alter entirely. Algernon Sidney was a man of integrity and worth, in days when few were so. He lived in a corrupt age, under a corrupt government; his opinions, therefore, seemed almost justified by the state of affairs around him, and the calm heroic way in which he met his death excited the sympathy and admiration of all classes; but had he lived a century or two later, I do not think so high an estimate would have been formed of his character, for he was obstinate, prejudiced, and violent."

"He looks determined," said Mrs. Carteret, for they were still standing before his picture. "There is something rather grand in the outline of his face, with its aquiline nose and serious expression."

"And there was something grand, too, in the outlines of his character," said Mr. Carteret.

"Sincerity and earnestness of purpose are always grand, I think," said Laura.

"I see you are determined to uphold your hero, Laura. He showed wonderful temper and patience during his trial, and was a great contrast, in that respect to Judge Jeffreys, who tried him. When the

judge, after passing sentence upon him, concluded by saying: 'I pray God to make in you a temper fit for the other world, for I see you are not fit for this', he answered calmly, stretching out his hand, 'My Lord, feel my pulse, and see if I am disordered; I bless God I never was in a better temper than I am now.' He went to the scaffold with an air of triumph, and died praying for his country."

"To sum up," said Hugh, "he was great in his death, if not in his life."

"Thank you, Papa," said Charles. "I sha'n't forget Algernon Sidney, I think, now that I have seen his picture, and heard all about him."

After seeing all that was to be seen in the old house, they wandered about the park for some time, looking at the beeches, the oak called Sidney's Oak, and listening to stories from their father, of Sir Philip Sidney and his friends; and at last were very glad to return to the inn and dine.

But when the time arrived for them to leave Penshurst, they were one and all sorry to go. Mr. Carteret and his sons had made an expedition in the afternoon in search of cricket bats, whilst Mrs. Carteret and her daughters wandered once more into the park, and through the churchyard, where several graves, planted with flowers, attracted their attention; and Laura made a sketch of the old gateway—all she ventured to undertake, for the varied outline of the old house itself, with its many armorial shields, grotesque carvings, and traceries, would have occupied a longer time than she had to spare. Jane and Mrs. Carteret, whilst sitting down on some timber in the park, watching the deer, and seeing the long evening shadows creeping on, agreed that it was the very place to sit down and write a pastoral poem in, but almost too quiet and peaceful a spot to have nurtured such active, brilliant spirits as Philip and Algernon Sidney. The railway whistle of the distant train made Jane remark:

"How little of the beloved 'solitarinesse' of Pens-

hurst, would so popular a man as Sir Philip have enjoyed had railway trains existed in his time."

On their return home, they found Ada had had a very happy day at the Rectory, and was full of the tea party in the woods, which Mr. Roberts was anxious to have whilst the fine weather lasted. It was accordingly settled for the next day but one; and two days after that, Charles was to return to school, a prospect which made him very doleful, for although he did not dislike being at school, he had so much enjoyed the freedom of these holidays, the companionship of Edgar Veryan, and all the country amusements and pleasures, that he was very sorry to relinquish them."

The next morning when they were seated round the breakfast table, just about to begin their meal, Mrs. Carteret said:

"Charles, there is a proverb which says: 'The early bird picks up the worm;' now I happened to get up this morning, and look out of my window very early, and there I saw an early bird in the field opposite, and I can't help feeling curious to know what sort of worms he was picking up?"

Charles laughed and coloured, and looked mysterious, and said: "Wait a little, and you will see."

He had hardly uttered the words before the door opened, and Mrs. Price herself entered, bearing a covered dish in her hand, which she placed before Mr. Carteret, saying, as she did so:

"You may be quite satisfied about them, Sir, as I have inspected them myself."

"Thank you, Mrs. Price; for whatever it is—you have brought me something very good, I dare say," replied Mr. Carteret, as he lifted the cover off, and displayed a dish of very fine mushrooms.

"This is a treat, indeed—nothing I like better, especially for breakfast, and they seem cooked to perfection. Where did you get them from, Mrs. Price?"

"They came out of the field in front there, Sir, and—"

At this moment Mr. Carteret looked up, and seeing Charles' pleased, happy face, an idea instantly struck him. •

"Ah, Charlie, I see—I understand it now—this is the work of the early bird, is it not, my boy?"

"Yes, Papa; I heard you say yesterday, when we found a mushroom in Penshurst Park, that you were very fond of mushrooms, so I thought that I would try and get some for you; and Mrs. Price told me if I got up early enough, before other people came, I should be sure to find some."

"Thank you, my dear boy. I am sure these will be the best mushrooms I shall ever eat, enjoyed doubly for being owed to your affectionate thoughtfulness."

The pleasure of giving pleasure is perhaps the greatest in the world, and Charles was of that opinion at this moment, and was more than repaid for the little effort it had cost him to get up so early that morning; for, tired with the previous day's excursion to Penshurst, he would gladly have slept later. For the next two or three mornings, until the day of his departure, his father's breakfast table was supplied with a dish of mushrooms of his gathering; and what was a great triumph to him also, was that Hugh, who was rather inclined to be lazy in the morning, got up, two days before he went, to help him, and said: "He supposed he had better get into the way of doing so, as his father might not like to go without his mushrooms, after having once had them." In his heart he would not have liked his father to suppose that he, too, was incapable of exerting himself, and taking a little trouble to please him.

"I shall have to thank you, Charlie, too, for reforming Hugh. I did not like his getting into such late hours," said Mrs. Carteret.

"Could any day be more perfect for our tea

party?" said Laura, as they bowled along the road to Seven Oaks' Common.

"How deliciously the hops smell," said Jane. "I suppose they will begin picking them soon."

"Next week, Mr. Price told me; he said they were quite ripe, and ready," answered Hugh.

"How sorry I am, I shall not be here," said poor Charles, with a sigh; "I wanted so much to see the man dancing about in the long sack hanging from the floor."

"That will be an odd sight certainly; but there is a great deal to be done before it comes to that—the picking and drying," said Hugh.

"Well, I should have helped to pick them, if I had been here, for Mr. Price said I should have a bin to myself."

"Never mind, Charlie," said Jane, good-naturedly, "I shall write to you and tell you all about it; and I daresay it won't be as pleasant as you fancy. We have not got much more than three weeks to stay ourselves. I shall be so sorry to leave my flowers."

"I suppose you will take your orchises up to London with you?" said Charles.

"I don't know what to do; I am afraid they won't live in London, and I can't bear to leave them behind me."

"Pray," said Mr. Carteret, "what are all these empty baskets for? that you have brought with you."

"For blackberries, Papa; Mrs. Price says there are such quantities on the Common where we are going."

"But do you intend to fill all these baskets, full? What can you do with such a quantity?"

"Preserve them, Papa. Mrs. Price says, with a little apple and a few damsons mixed, they are capital."

"Mrs. Price ought to be an authority on such matters," said Mr. Carteret, making a funny face; "but I have my doubts about the result."

"Oh, I am sure," cried Ada, "that it will be very good; and if we don't like it, Mrs. Price wants to have some herself, so we have promised to pick as many as we can."

They had now come to the end of their drive, and had to get out and walk a short distance to the place of rendezvous. They were received with shouts of welcome from the Veryan family, who, with Mr. Robarts and Miss Lane, were there before them.

It was a very charming and pretty spot that the old clergyman had selected for his party, situated on one of the highest parts of the common. They could just catch, through a break in the trees, a distant view of the rich Weald country. The ground being tolerably free just there from furze, bramble, or under-wood, a short close turf had sprung up, giving it the appearance of a little lawn in a thicket, and a large beech spreading out its long arms, afforded a delightful shade from the hot August sun.

"What do you think of my drawing-room?" asked Mr. Robarts.

"Delightful!" answered Mrs. Carteret.

"Here, underneath this fine old tree, I shall have the carriage cushions and plaids brought, for the elders to sit upon; and there, in the open space, the young ones can make their fire and boil their water without fear of setting the wood on fire, which would not be difficult to do, I assure you, now the gorse and ferns are so dry."

"It is certainly a most convenient spot," said Mrs. Veryan; "for just behind those trees close by, there is a little farm house, where we are to get our milk, and butter, and eggs, and water."

"How curious it is," remarked Mr. Carteret, "that every now and then on this Common, or rather Wood, as I think it ought to be called, one comes on a little farm, with its hop garden, and two or three fields round it—a little oasis of cultivation in the midst of wildness."

This happy little party of children and grown people now dispersed, to reassemble again in an hour's time, when they were to make tea. Some were bent on blackberry gathering; Laura and Miss Lane on a search for rare ferns.

"Don't lose your way again, Laura!" cried her father.

"I'll take care of her, Sir," said Miss Lane; "I know every inch of this ground."

The hour passed rapidly away, without the party having gone to any great distance—for blackberries were plentiful all round, and remarkably fine. The boys cut hooked sticks out of the wood, and pulled down the top branches for the girls, who picked them, whilst first one and then the other exclaimed, "Oh do come here, there are such beauties;" or, "Please, Hugh, pull this branch down, for I never saw such fine ones;" or a cry for help from Ada or Mary Vryan, who could not get out of the brambles without tearing their frocks to pieces.

So the hour went by, and all returned to the trysting place—Laura and Miss Lane with, as they thought, two or three rare ferns; but Mr. Roberts, on looking at them, declared them to be only very young ferns of some common varieties. Miss Lane was disappointed.

"I really think," said she, "that I shall give up studying ferns, they are so very difficult; the more I fancy I know about them the less I find I do."

"But they are so pretty," urged Jane. "If I lived in the country, I would have a fernery of every British fern I could get—all collected, planted, and attended to by myself. I wish we lived in the country."

"Are ferns used for anything?" inquired Laura of Mr. Roberts.

"For a great many things, in different parts of the country. In some places they thatch their out-houses with ferns, and a capital thatch they make—

dry, and free from insects; in others, people use ferns for litter; and my gardener always uses them instead of matting for covering up my plants from frost in winter, and also for packing apples upon. I am not quite sure whether deer eat the green tender shoots, but I know that pigs are very fond of the root, and will turn up the ground with their noses whenever they can, to get at it. So you see there are various uses for them, besides their medical properties, and all the old Fairy powers attributed to the fern seed. But we must see about our tea. Off with you, young ones, and find plenty of dry sticks for our fires; for we must have two fires—one for our kettle, and another for a saucepan to boil eggs in.”

The blackberry baskets were carefully put down, and all started off to collect the fuel—no difficult task in that region of wood. It was amusing to see them each coming back with their bundle in their hands, hot with the exertion of stooping and picking up sticks. When they thought they had got enough, they set to work to break the long pieces into shorter lengths. And then Mr. Roberts said, there must be a division of labour—that Hugh should construct one fire, Edgar and Charles the other.

Hugh immediately started off with his pocket clasp-knife to cut three strong stakes, which were to be fixed firmly in the ground, over the fire, and fastened at the top together, so as to form a support from which to hang the kettle. Edgar and Charles on the other hand, determined, if they could not find any old broken brick near the farm house, to get some large stones with which to construct a sort of hearth to put their fire upon.

The young ladies, meantime, had spread a large plaid on the ground for a tablecloth, and were busy laying out cups and saucers, and plates, loaves of bread, and cakes, and plates of ripe plums and greengages from the rectory garden. What amusement and fun there was going on

throughout these preparations. How Ada and Mary screamed with laughter at Mr. Carteret's jokes; and how pleased they were to be allowed to go to the farmhouse by themselves, and bring back the butter and milk.

"I felt exactly like a cottage girl," said Mary Veryan, "as I was carrying this little milk can along the road."

"And you, Ada, something like little Red Riding Hood, carrying the fresh pat of butter home to her grandmother," said Mr. Carteret. "Now I feel uncommonly like the wolf, going to eat you all up." So up he jumped, and chased the little girls in and out among the trees, until they were thoroughly tired with laughing and running, and obliged to sit down to rest themselves.

At last Hugh had got his stakes fixed to his satisfaction, and Edgar and Charles had procured some large chalk stones, with which they built a square and laid their wood upon it. And then came the grand pleasure of setting fire to the wood, and seeing it blaze up. The small dry twigs and sticks they had collected burnt readily enough, and soon sent up a famous blaze and fierce crackling noise.

"Now Edith, Laura, Jane—look after the fires, whilst we go and get the water," cried the boys.

"It is very easy work after all, making a fire out of doors," said Jane.

"Easy enough here, my dear, because you have plenty of wood at hand, and dry wood too; but not so easy after heavy rain, or on bare moors, where you have to search for any kind of fuel," said Mr. Robarts.

"How often one has read in books, of travel, about the difficulties poor, tired, worn out travellers had in making a fire," remarked Laura.

"Now here comes Hugh with a great can of water, and Edgar with a kettle, and Charles I declare with a saucepan," exclaimed Edith.

The next business was to fill the kettle with water, and hang it over the fire. Mr. Roberts produced a hook, which he had brought for the purpose; to this they fastened a strong bit of cord, which was tied to the top of their three-legged support—the hook hanging then a convenient height from the fire. The kettle was hooked on in a moment over the blazing fire, and it was not very long before the well known singing sound of boiling water was heard.

As to the other boys, their saucepan was placed in a moment, the stones round keeping the wood together, so as to bear the weight of the pan. In another quarter of an hour, the tea was made, the eggs were boiled, and everybody doing full justice to the fare—particularly those who had been so hard at work beforehand.

They had all finished this pleasant meal, and the girls were beginning to collect the things together, previous to packing them up, when a rustling noise in the underwood attracted their attention; and on turning round they saw the dark swarthy face and coal black hair of a tall elderly Gipsy woman. She came forward saying:—

“Good evening to yer honours! Good luck to ye, bonnie ladies!—playing at Gipsies are ye? Well, it’s a pleasant life and a free. Shall I tell yer fortune, my pretty lady?” to Laura who was near her.

“No, thank you,” said Laura, shrinking back, not particularly fancying her look, or the strong smell of tobacco about her.

“Well then, your’s, my bonnie bird, with your pretty blue eyes,” to Edith Veryan.

“No, no! my good friend,” said Mr. Carteret, coming forward; “these young ladies are so happy now, they don’t care to look into futurity. But you shall tell mine if you like! Come, here’s a shilling for you.”

The Gipsy took the shilling, then took Mr. Car-

teret's hand, looked into the palm, and appeared to study it a few minutes; then let it go, and said:—

"No, she couldn't; she wouldn't—not for twice the money, tell the gentleman his fortune: the lines of life were very troubled—No, she'd rather not."

Mr. Carteret laughed, for he knew it was only one of her tricks to get a little more money; but he said:—

"Well, then, I would rather not; but as you've got a shilling, you shall tell this fellow his fortune. There, Hugh, go on with you!" pushing him forward.

So Hugh, laughing, went with the gipsy behind a bush, and had his fortune told—for secrecy, he said, made it more serious; when he came back, he looked very solemn and mysterious, and would not reveal anything, except that in after years he was to beware of a lady whose name began with W. Ada immediately tried to think of all their young lady friends whose name began with W., till Hugh told her she "was a little goose."

The Gipsy woman was very urgent now to tell Miss Lane's fortune; but Mr. Carteret put a stop to anything more of the sort, and began to ask her where she came from, and where the rest of her people were. She replied, that they had an encampment not very far from that place, that their party consisted of three men, four women, and children—that they were come, as they came every year, to pick the small garden of hops of this farmer near; he was an Essex man, and they came out of Essex, and they always picked his hops for him, by themselves, with no other assistance; and he was a good man, and a kind.

"It is not often," said Mr. Robarts, "that Gipsies do that sort of work here. Large bodies of people come from the borough of Southwark, Irish, Welsh, Scotch, English, all sorts; but not many of the Gipsy race."

"Na, na! we come by ourselves, and keep to ourselves," said the Gipsy woman.

Mr. Carteret questioned the woman a good deal about herself and family; their names were Boswell, she said, and they generally went into a house in the winter near some Essex town; her children had all been baptized, and some of them could read a little; one of her sons had "'listed," and was gone to the "Ingies" as a soldier—and one of her daughters was lying ill now, yonder, in the tent.

And the old woman dropped her whining coaxing tone as she said this, and looked grave and anxious. Mrs. Carteret asked what was the matter with her daughter? and was told it was a bad leg, in consequence of a fall. Finding it was nothing infectious, Mrs. Carteret and Mrs. Veryan said they would go and see her; but they did not wish the young people to accompany them. Mrs. Veryan turned to her daughter Edith, and told her to collect the remains of their meal—the bread, butter, tea, and sugar, and she would send one of the Gipsy children to fetch them. The old woman's eyes sparkled with pleasure as she heard this, and saw the alacrity with which the children obeyed their mother's kind thought. She readily turned to show the two ladies the way to her rude home—so true it is that a kind word will oftentimes open the gate that seems locked and barred against every other attempt.

The Gipsy encampment was about a quarter of an hour's walk from where they were, and consisted of a good sized covered waggon or caravan, belonging to one family, and two tents or waggon tops placed on the ground, as a shelter for the rest; they were pitched on a bit of waste ground belonging to the farmer, not very far from the farm. But he told Mr. Carteret afterwards, he never had any complaint to make of the Gipsies, on the contrary, he considered them a protection against the tramps and vagrants

who came down from the suburbs of London, and were a very disreputable lot indeed. These Gipsies never stole anything from him, at any rate.

To one of the tents the old woman led the ladies, and there, lying on a blanket on the ground, was a poor woman, worn, emaciated and haggard looking—her dark hair was hanging about her face, matted and tangled, and the odour of the atmosphere around was not too pleasant; but Mrs. Carteret and Mrs. Veryan were Christian women, not to be deterred by a few disagreeables from doing a kind act.

"My poor woman," said Mrs. Veryan, "you seem very suffering, hardly fit to be lying out here, I think."

"I am, indeed, but sairly, my lady. If I could but get my leg well and walk about, I should be better."

"Has any doctor seen you?" asked Mrs. Carteret.

"A gentleman near Maidstone looked at my bad place, y'r ladyship, and said, I must live well, and eat and drink, and gave me some stuff to put on; but I don't get on, and have got no heart now to victuals."

"I'll show the leddies your leg, darling," said the older woman, as she took off some dark horrid-looking rags, and displayed a shocking sight—an open wound, in a dreadful state of dirt and neglect. She told the ladies it had been caused by a long pole running into the leg, and by her having afterwards walked a long distance whilst the wound was inflamed; and then, as she got gradually weaker, probably from insufficient nourishment, the sore had increased, and she was now unable to stand.

The two ladies felt almost sick at the sight; but overcoming their feelings, Mrs. Veryan said:

"Will you take my advice, and will you, let me say what I think proper to you about this sore?"

"That she will, my leddy," said the old woman, "after the tea, and the bread, and the good things coming for her—that she will!"

"Well then," continued Mrs. Veryan, "the first

thing to be done is, to get that leg well washed, and clean; and then we must put some soft clean rag upon it. I will send you some, if you will wash the wound first in a little luke-warm water. After that, I'll ask my doctor to look at her, if she will allow it; and I'll take care she has what the doctor orders. Will you do this?"

The old woman was ready to promise anything, and the poor sick creature looked as if she would like to do something for herself, but had not strength.

"I'll wash her leg, my leddy, now," said their first acquaintance.

At a sign from Mrs. Carteret, Mrs. Veryan said,—
"Then do, my good friend; do it gently—very gently, and we'll walk about whilst you do. And you shall have this clean pocket-hand-kerchief to wrap round the place when you have done it—and mind you burn these nasty rags."

They went outside, and sent off two of the older children for the tea, etcetera, and told them to bring all back at once, for they thought a cup of warm tea would do the poor woman good. And Mrs. Veryan told the children to ask for an old cushion they had brought with them to sit upon. Before very long the old woman called them in, and showed them the poor leg, with an air of triumph. It was not quite what other people would call very clean, but greatly improved. The woman herself felt relief and comfort from the absence of the irritating matter, and when the soft clean handkerchief was bound round the leg, and the pillow brought and placed under her back, and a cup of warm tea got for her, she loudly expressed her pleasure and comfort, and called down the blessings of heaven on their heads. They then took their leave, promising to send some linen rag and the doctor, and receiving the old woman's promise that she would wash the wound next day and keep it clean, Mrs. Veryan impressing on her mind that it was essential to her daughter's recovery.

"There is much that is good, after all, about these people," said Mrs. Carteret, when on returning to the rest of the party, they talked over their visit and the Gipsies.

"It is a pity they are so incorrigibly dirty, generally speaking; it does not, however, seem to do them much harm, as they are a fine healthy race. They are fond of their children, and kind to each other—one good point at any rate."

This little incident closed the tea party in the woods. It had been a happy day, and they had a beautiful drive home in the cool of the evening. Hugh was much joked about his fortune, but continued very mysterious on the subject. Mr. Carteret told his children many curious anecdotes about Gipsies; and Mrs. Carteret promised, for their usual afternoon reading, to find them some account of the origin, and something about the habits and customs, of these mysterious wanderers.





CHAPTER XVII.

THE GIPSIES—AND WHO ARE THEY?

FROM the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the Gipsies first appeared in Europe, they have been a puzzle and a source of annoyance to every country in it. Their lawless, unsettled habits, make them unwelcome guests, and if not dangerous, very disagreeable neighbours; whilst the manners, customs, and language peculiar to them, which they retain in spite of every influence of country and climate, have made the learned consider them a phenomenon worth studying, and caused the world in general to regard them with curiosity and interest.

"In the space of between three or four hundred years," says a learned author, "they have gone wandering about like pilgrims and strangers; they are found in eastern and western countries, as well among the rude as the civilized, the indolent and the active people; yet they remain ever what their fathers were—Gipsies. Africa makes them no blacker, nor Europe whiter; they neither learn to be lazy in Spain, nor diligent in Germany." Like the Jews, they are foreigners in the land; and like them have been the objects of scorn and dislike, and in some countries, especially in Spain, under Charles the Fifth and Philip the Second, of relentless and cruel persecutions. Amongst the many wild and absurd theories on the origin of the Gipsies, an idea that they might be the lost ten tribes has been hazarded; there, however, is but one point of resemblance between them and the Jews—that of being

scattered and dispersed. The latter people preserve, like the Gipsies, the characteristics and peculiar features of their race, in every land and clime; but the Jew, whilst strictly adhering to the religion and traditions of his fathers, and carefully refraining from intermarrying with the people he lives amongst, adopts, in all other respects, the customs and habits of the country; uses the local language, to the exclusion of his own, which would have died out had not literature preserved it; and, in short, becomes a good citizen of the State he has selected—is a Frenchman, Russian, or Englishman, as the case may be, though still a Jew.

The Gipsy, on the other hand, feels no interest, collectively or individually, in the fate of the nation upon whose soil he lives; if its political condition were so far to affect him, as to make it necessary for him to leave it, he would find all he wants elsewhere. If driven out of France, he would make a footing in Spain,—he would soon acquire the language of the land, and meantime would meet those of his own race, who would at once understand, recognise, and receive him as a brother—for Gipsies all over the world speak the same language and understand each other, although, of course, words and idioms peculiar to the country they inhabit, have become mixed up with their own. The preservation of this language orally, during three or four centuries of wanderings, is one of the most remarkable circumstances connected with Gipsy history, and has been the means by which, during the last century, their origin has been determined.

In the matter of religion, the Jew and the Gipsy are the very reverse of each other. It is the adherence to the creed of his fathers that makes, and keeps the Jew distinct from other nations; as soon as he renounces that creed, he loses his individuality, he intermarries with other races—he has no other change to make but this—for he is already in feeling, in habits, language, and dress, the son of the soil he lives

upon; he may transmit to his descendants the cast of features we call the Jewish type, but it is ere long modified and lost. Now the only thing the Gipsy did not bring with him was religion; the only thing he takes from the country he lives in, if he has any at all, is its religion; in no other particular does he conform to the habits of those around him; he wears his dress of rags and tatters in the coldest and the hottest climate, and lives the same out-of-door lazy, idle life, wherever he may be. There is, therefore, absolutely nothing in common between Gipsies and Jews, but the fact of their being a distinct people, scattered over all parts of the continent of Europe and Asia. Some writers have tried to make out that they are the descendants of the Canaanites, driven out of the land of Canaan by Joshua; others more wild again, that they are the descendants of the Egyptian sorcerers who stood before Pharaoh; and in Spain they are supposed to be of Moorish extraction. The Gipsies themselves, however, on their first appearance in Europe, invariably gave the same account of themselves, and though the reasons assigned for their leaving their own country was different in every different land, made to suit the prejudices or views of the people they had to deal with, they always agreed on one point, namely, that they were of Egyptian origin, and that from Egypt they came.

There were none to contradict the truth of this statement, and none who then cared to do so; for there was nothing in their poverty-stricken appearance, or their inconsiderable numbers, when they first appeared, to excite alarm, consequently the idea that they were Egyptians was readily received; and in England they were at once called Gipsies—a corruption of the word.

About seventy or eighty years ago, however, a new idea sprang up about them. European occupation of India had led to a much more extended study and acquaintance with Oriental manners and language. And those who had opportunities of acquiring any of the

dialects of Hindostanee, and of observing the peculiarities of some of the Eastern nations, discovered strong and startling points of resemblance between them and the mysterious Gipsies. Many words in their language were identical; many habits, revolting to Europeans, and supposed to be exclusively Gipsy, were found to exist amongst some of the Parias, or low classed Hindostances; for instance, the Gipsy feeds with gratification upon the flesh of animals who have died of disease, or from fire; and if remonstrated with about this, will ask whether the animal slain by God is not more worthy to be eaten than that killed by man. So also will the Paria; and the menial occupations of both are very similar, as workers of iron, &c. Again, the Indian's tricks of juggling and sleight of hand, answer to the Gipsy's pretended skill in fortune telling and necromancy. The chief point of resemblance, however, and at the same time the most important and satisfactory, lies in the language. Sanscrit words, and words of Sanscrit derivation, are largely found in the Gipsy tongue; and form, of course, the basis of the Hindostanee dialects; from this fact, and various other considerations, it is now considered that the Gipsies are of Oriental origin; in all probability a low caste Indian tribe, driven out of their own country at the time of the invasion of Hindostan by Timur Beg, or Tamerlane, in 1399, either by the conquerors, or by their own countrymen, who took advantage of troublous times to get rid of them. Mr. Borrow, in his entertaining book about the Gipsies in Spain, mentions the fact of the Gipsies there having a faint belief in the metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls; this, if so, is very curious, and seems like a confirmation of their Indian origin, as this is one of the doctrines of Buddhism, the faith of a great part of India, and is the only vestige yet discovered of any original creed or faith amongst the Gipsies at all. Let us turn, however, to an account taken from a French author, Pasquier, of their first appearance in France:

"On August 17th, 1427, came to Paris, twelve penitents, as they called themselves, namely: a duke, an earl, and ten men, all on horseback, and calling themselves good Christians. They were of Lower Egypt, and gave out, that not long before, the Christians had subdued their country, and obliged them to embrace Christianity, on pain of being put to death. Those who were baptised, were great Lords in their own country, and had a king and queen there. Some time after their conversion the Saracens overran their country, and obliged them to renounce Christianity.

"When the Emperor of Germany, the King of Poland, and other Christian princes, heard of this, they fell upon them, and obliged the whole of them, great and small, to quit their country, and go to the Pope at Rome, who enjoined them seven years' penance, to wander over the world, without lying in a bed. They had been wandering, they said, five years, when they came to Paris, first the principal people, and soon after the commonalty, about one hundred, or one hundred and twenty, reduced from one thousand, when they came home, the rest being dead, with their king and queen. They were lodged by the police, out of the city, at the Chapel St. Denis.

"Nearly all had their ears bored, and one or two silver rings in each, which they said were esteemed ornaments in their own country. The men were black, their hair curled; the women remarkably black, their hair black, their only clothes, a large old shaggy garment, tied over the shoulders with a cloth or cord sash, and under it a miserable petticoat. In short, they were the most wretched creatures that had ever been seen in France; and notwithstanding their poverty, there were among them women, who, by looking into people's hands, told their fortunes. And what was worse, they picked people's pockets of their money, and got it into their own, through telling these things by art, magic, &c.

"For upwards of one hundred, or one hundred and

THE CARTERETS.

twenty years after their appearance in France, they wandered about that country, under the name of Bohemians; for having at any rate come, in the last instance, from Bohemia, the French applied this name to them. The large shaggy coat described, is much what was worn by the shepherds and peasants of that country. They were soon, however, looked upon as impostors and vagabonds in France, and in 1561 excluded the kingdom; and the police has ever after been strict in compelling their departure, when found there, so that there are fewer of them now in France than in any other European state.

If the Gipsies were originally some despised low caste Indian tribe, it is very easy to understand why they should have given such false accounts of themselves, and by passing themselves off as great people, endeavoured to conceal their former condition; but although they effectually succeeded in this latter attempt remaining a mystery and a puzzle for so long, they were very soon found out, in every country, to be imposters, as far as their grandeur was concerned; and their thieving propensities and utterly worthless characters, caused them, before long, to be universally regarded much in the same light as Parias are now by their Indian countrymen.

The first Gipsies who arrived in England had the wit to drop the characters of pilgrims and penitents assumed in France and elsewhere; they seemed instinctively to comprehend that whilst the Englishman was as easily duped as his neighbours, and well inclined to accept their pretensions to be Egyptian soothsayers and astrologers, he would be very incredulous about their nobility. They appear to have excited a good deal of attention and curiosity at first, people going to see them, and having their fortunes told, and they rapidly spread over the country, forming separate families or tribes; each governed by its own chief or king, as they ambitiously styled him, and generally adopting some English

surname, as well as the Gipsy patronymic by which they were known to each other. They evidently found our island, with its green lanes, sheltering woods, and open healthy commons, very much to their taste, and made themselves (as foreigners, generally do), very much at home, increasing so rapidly, that in Queen Elizabeth's reign they numbered 10,000. The Gipsy women in England are noted for being handsomer than any of their race elsewhere. The glow of health which our fresh sea breezes impart, gives a warmer, richer tone to their tawny skins, and the children of either sex have often been remarked upon, not only for their well made, easy, and elegantly proportioned forms, but for great beauty of feature. The women soon age and become haggard, from their constant exposure to all weathers, want of cleanliness, and habit of smoking, in which they indulge as much as the men; but at seventeen or eighteen, a Gipsy girl, with her black hair, full red lips, white teeth (for which Gipsies are remarkable), and splendid eyes, has been a subject that artists have often delighted to paint. The men are in general tall, active, well made fellows; but the open careless expression of the Gipsy boy is very soon exchanged for a different look, sometimes scowling and angry, and at all times sly and cunning, the consequence of the demoralizing life they lead. They, as well as the women, seem to have a natural taste for music, singing their own rude songs with taste and precision, and not unfrequently playing some instrument. The women assist the men in some of their occupations, but their trade is peculiarly that of fortune telling, and they practice an engaging, insinuating sort of manner, very different from the sort of dogged insolent way in which a Gipsy man will address you. Palmistry, or the art of telling past events and predicting future ones from the lines in the palm of the hand, is by no means exclusively a Gipsy accomplishment, most of the pretended magicians and horoscope drawers have practised it, and there have even been

books written on the subject. But to return to the English Gipsies, the habits they brought with them when they landed on our shores they retain to the present day, although their numbers are fast diminishing, and will, as far as the pure Gipsy race is concerned, continue to do so; the enclosure of our waste lands, the overlooking of police, and the watchfulness of gamekeepers, now makes it difficult for them to obtain their living in the old way, and compels them to seek it by more honest means; this bringing them into greater communication with the rest of the world, induces some of the younger ones to engage in a more settled and respectable mode of life, which not unfrequently ends in their marrying out of their own race. But of the regular vagabond, heathenish, old Gipsy race, there are still specimens enough in England and Ireland. You are walking, perchance, one fine summer's morn, over one of the rugged, picturesque, furze-covered commons in Surrey, some twenty miles only from London. You and your companion stop to admire a bit of charming foreground; a pond, with its steep broken banks of yellow gravel, and a lovely soft distant view of wood and hills and happy looking villages. Suddenly, from behind a large clump of stunted hollies, and a tangled undergrowth of furze and broom, up starts a little, dark, supple figure, and making his advances by turning half a dozen times head over heels, stands up before you, and with laughing dark eyes, and unabashed countenance, craves a ha'penny from "your honor." His bare feet, tattered dress, and matted hair, hanging wildly about his face, at first excite your compassion, but a second look reveals so much health and happiness, so much real enjoyment of life, that you feel such sentiments are misplaced, and with curiosity you ask this little imp, "where the camp is?" He points to your right, where the ground suddenly sloping, forms a sort of dell; warm and sunny, but sheltered from the winds which oft-times sweep fiercely over this heath; you decide to go

and look at the Gipsy tents, particularly when you hear that the men are all absent, gone to the neighbouring fair to sell their horses, for the Gipsies have not only been sellers but breeders of horses, and their young stud not unfrequently resemble their masters, being as shaggy, wild, and uncared for as it is possible for colts to be.

The Gipsy urchin runs merrily down a bit of steep path in front of you, and as you descend after him, you see the round canvas tops of the Gipsy waggons, which have been taken off and placed on the ground, and which form the house or tent of a whole family—sometimes of three generations—and their only shelter from the wind and rain. The waggons are a little distance off, and not far from them, a couple of wretched looking horses, one of them blind of an eye, are feeding on the scanty grass. The blue smoke is curling lazily upwards from a fire of sticks, over which, supported upon three legs, an iron pot is suspended. We are too discreet to ask what that pot contains;—perhaps after all, little more than the fat bacon and greens of every honest labourer, for the poor Gipsies, like the dog with a bad name, are not always so bad as they are represented, and more frequently fast than feast. A couple of yelping curs rush out from the tents and threaten to fly at your feet, but they are soon called back and silenced, and the whole Gipsy population starts up and crowds round us, evidently rejoicing in the incident of a visit; after all they are but children, with the exception of an old woman, who might be the great-grandmother of them all, from her appearance, but is only one generation removed from them,—the men are gone to the fair with their horses, the women with them, to tell fortunes and make a little money that way. The old woman has been left in charge, and is sitting, as you advance, on the ground in front of her tent smoking a short brown pipe, a large cotton handkerchief is tied over her head and under her chin—her hair is rather smoother, her clothes less

ragged, than those of her grandchildren, but of that age that all have assumed a sort of neutral colour, impossible to define. She gets up, bids the children stand back, and wishes good luck to the bonnie ladies, — won't they cross her hand with silver? and have their fortunes told? But as you decline, she does not persist, for she leaves that now mostly to the younger women, who are gone off smartened up a bit, with bright red handkerchiefs over their heads, their hair glossy and smooth, and their hands clean for once, and adorned with large silver rings; you notice that the old woman has earrings of gold in her ears, and as with gipsy quickness she observes you looking at them, she says they are more than two hundred years old, for they were her mother's and grandmother's before her; and her grandmother was 102 when she died; and you quite believe this, because Gipsies are wonderfully healthy and strong; the little infant of a few weeks' old, carried about on its mother's back, seems to thrive and flourish under circumstances that would destroy another child; it crawls upon the damp earth, with hardly a rag on, when its a year old; and it is, perhaps, the freedom and absence of restraint that make the limbs in after years so shapely, so firm, and yet so light and graceful. You find a few pence in your pocket which you distribute amongst the children, this makes you popular, in spite of your refusal to have your fortune told, and you slip a shilling privately into the old woman's hand, which opens her heart, and she answers your many questions about her and her family. Their name is Cooper (a common name among Gipsies), except her married daughter, whose name is Smith, and her husband, the old woman's son-in-law, is a tinker, or mender of pots and pans; but her own sons do nothing but look after their horses, or make snares for rabbits (this we quite believe) or mole traps; and then they keep chiefly to the southern counties, and seldom or ever pass the winter in a house; her daughter Smith has done so,

and she has gone with her, but only for a short time; and during that time the children certainly did learn their letters and a little cyphering, at a school near, but that is all the education they ever had; but they have, however, all been baptised and christened by a Christian minister; so after a little more talk, you take your leave, not knowing whether to be sorry or not, for those who seem so well content with their wretched existence. The old woman was looking forward to the men's return from the fair (provided they did a good business there) with a fresh supply of tobacco and snuff, and a treat of brandy—the three grand luxuries of life to them,—and you feel sure that your shilling will go, on the first convenient opportunity, to purchase one or other of these articles for her own private enjoyment. These Gipsies were Coopers and Smiths, but the names of “Draper, Boswell, Lee, Allen, Mansfield, Stanley, Loversedge, Glover, Williams, Martin, Carew, Plunket, Corrie,” &c., are nearly as common in England.

In some parts of Europe, as in Spain, where they keep public houses, and in Transylvania and Hungary, the Gipsies have settled habitations—but these are seldom more than miserable huts.

Those in Hungary, however, who have settled dwellings, “seldom pass a spring without taking advantage of the first fine settled weather to set up a tent for their summer residence; under this each enjoys himself with his family, nor thinks of his house till winter returns, and frost and snow drive him back again.” And these householding Gipsies in Hungary “are very partial to gold and silver plate, particularly silver cups, which is a disposition they have in common with wandering tribes. They let slip no opportunity of acquiring something of this kind, and will even starve themselves to procure it; and though they seem little anxious to heap up riches for their children, yet these frequently inherit a treasure of this kind, and are obliged in their turn, to preserve

it as a sacred inheritance. This inclination to deprive themselves of necessities, that they may possess a superfluity is curious, yet appears to be ancient, and was probably inherent in them when first seen by Europeans."

In Hungary, the Gipsies are workers in iron to so great an extent that the Hungarians have a proverb, "So many Gipsies so many smiths." In England they do little more than tinkering work—or, at the most, manufacture a few pins, needles, nails, and knives; and occasionally, but not often, a rude horse shoe. The Gipsy's tools are very inferior; he generally builds his own kiln and forge, and kindles a fire of wood gathered by himself, then sits down on the ground, cross-legged, in true Oriental fashion, whilst his wife, sitting by him, blows the bellows and feeds the fire. Everywhere they dislike and refuse to follow an agricultural employment, and almost everywhere they are horse dealers, and breeders of horses; in Hungary they sometimes grow rich in this trade. And in that country also, they have another occupation, which was at one time, and perhaps may still be, considered as the exclusive right of the Gipsies alone. They are the gold washers—for gold is found in small quantities in the river beds; and for this privilege they pay an annual tribute to the Hospodar of Wallachia, their chief, or Waiwode, as he is called there; who is elected to this authority over all the tribes, being made responsible for his people paying the same.

They are thus, to a certain extent, recognized there by law as a separate people; in other countries they are classed with vagabonds and wanderers, and subjected to the same penalties and inspection by the authorities as all strollers and tramps. Gipsies, however, seldom offend the law by any great crimes—they are too wary for that; they confine themselves to petty pilferings, deception, and small cheating. The Empress Maria Theresa, to

her great credit, endeavoured to improve the condition of this class of her subjects in Hungary. Many excellent regulations were made respecting them; and the young Gipsies were even, at one time, forcibly taken from their parents to be educated and taught respectable trades. But after a time these efforts were relaxed, the laws regarding Gipsies were not enforced; and they are now much in the same state there, as when they first arrived.

In Spain they are numerous, and are called Gitanos—any one who wants to know more about them in that country, will be amused as well as interested by Mr. Borrow's account of the "Gipsies in Spain." He found, however, many of the race holding respectable positions in society, following different callings, and acquiring wealth. They are frequent, too, in Russia, as Zingari, in most parts of Asia, almost as far as China; and Bishop Heber mentions having come across a tribe in the north of India, on the banks of the Ganges, speaking Hindoo as their mother tongue.

In Persia they exist also, and are known by a name signifying black eyes. They are met with in Egypt, where they are considered foreigners; in Turkey also, where they profess Mahommedanism, and are called Tchingones—whilst in Hungary and Transylvania they are styled Pharoah Ncpck, or Pharoah's people; and in Germany, generally Zigeuner. They are not often seen so far north as Norway and Sweden; but a few have been noticed there, and they were, I believe, designated there by a word signifying thief. In Scotland, they were always confined, to one part of the kingdom, Roxburghshire, and the adjacent country as far south as the border; the few stragglers who crossed over occasionally from Ireland wandered through the West, and elsewhere, and seldom remained long. Those in Roxburghshire were known by a name peculiar to themselves, and were long called Faw's band, after a leader or chief who

entered Scotland during Queen Mary's reign, called Will Faw, and who seems to have received the regal sanction for his authority over his people.

At the end of the last century there were a considerable number of Gipsies in Roxburghshire, chiefly located at the village or town of Kirk (church) Yetholm. At *Toun* Yetholm, close by, they were not tolerated. They were divided into clans or families, bearing the names of *Faa* (evidently some of Faw's band), Baillie, Young, Ruthven, and Gordon. During the winter they took up their settled quarters at Yetholm; the street they inhabited being called Tinkler's Row, from one of the names given to them by the country people; but directly spring returned, they were off to the open fields, following their small occupations, idling, thieving, fortune-telling, and so on. Sir Walter Scott was greatly interested in these people, and his inquiries concerning them elicited the following account of them from the manager of the Yetholm property, who gave them, however, in some respects, a better character than the world in general was inclined to accord to them.

"A strong spirit of independence," says this gentleman, "or what they would distinguish by the name of liberty, runs through the whole tribe. If, for instance, they made engagements, they chose to carry them out at their own time, and in their own way. A young man was sent to collect the rents of the Yetholm estate, furnished with a list of the tenants, and advised to consult with the landlord of an inn there, as to the best method of proceeding. It was settled that on a particular day the tenants should assemble at the inn and pay; but he observed that no one bearing the names of Faa, Young, Baillie, &c., were present. He remarked this to the landlord, who looked grave, and inquired 'if he had been desired to apply to these people especially for their money?' on being answered that he had not been, he advised him on no account to do so. 'Their money,' said he, 'is

as good as if it was already in your master's pocket; and he would not dare to ask them for it, either as rent or fee duty.' In a few weeks the money was paid to the office unsolicited. Indeed, the Gipsies of this community seemed to have some kind of honour about them: they reckoned it a disgrace to steal near their homes, or even at a distance if detected—always excepting the petty depredations of feeding their shelties and asses on the farmers' grass and corn. When trusted, even in money matters, they never deceived; but were revengeful and violent if crossed in their purposes, or checked in their misappropriations.

"They were sometimes called Tinklers, from their occupation; or Horners, from their making the horn spoons, called cutties; and, later, they were designated Muggers, or Potters. They bought the cheap or faulty earthenware at the different manufactories, and carried it about the country for sale, sleeping in barns or out-houses—or, in default of that, underneath the canvas coverings of their carts.

The latter occupation is now followed by English Gipsies as well as by the large class of hawkers and strollers who have adopted the Gipsy mode of life.

"The Yetholm Gipsies were great adepts at hunting, shooting, and fishing, and had no idea of being checked in these sports, either in any place or at any time, setting all game laws at defiance. They held their houses in Kirk Yetholm upon leases of nineteen times nineteen years, and paid a small sum yearly, as a sort of quit rent. They numbered, at this period, about one hundred and nine men, women, and children; and priding themselves, as it were, upon being a separate tribe, rarely intermarried out of the colony. They had exactly the same cast of features, the black eyes and hair, and tawny skins, of their race in other parts of the world; once seen, it was impossible to mistake them; but they gave their children some sort of education,—reading, writing, the first principles of arithmetic—in short, much the same as those of the

labouring people around them; and were particular about having them baptized by the neighbouring minister, deeming it unlucky to have an unchristened child long in the house."

Such was the condition of these northern Gipsies, some fifty or sixty years ago. It may, perhaps, interest our young readers to know how they are situated at the present moment, so we will turn to a recent account of Roxburghshire, by Mr. Jeffreys, and extract what he relates of them.

"The Roxburgh Gipsy tribes are now about eighty in number, consisting of Blythes, Taits, Ruthvens, Stairs, and Douglas—the tribe of Faas is now extinct. The chief employment of the Gipsies formerly, was travelling in promiscuous bands during the summer. They generally left their settlement at Kirk Yetholm in the end of March, and did not return till driven back by the storms of winter. Most of the men assisted in the operations of the harvest, and in the winter carted coal to Jedburgh.

"When out on the route, they lay beneath their carts, or upon straw under wicker frames with a cover which resisted the weather. During their progress through the country, they laid the farmyards, corn and potatoe fields, under considerable contribution. They had a perfect knack of thieving, and carried off everything that came in their way—even hay, hewn stones, wheels and axletrees. They may be said to have lived in a complete state of ignorance, 'without God, and without hope in the world,' till the Rev. John Baird was inducted to the pastoral charge of the parish, when, through his efforts, they were induced to attend church and school: and he obtained from the Edinburgh Bible Society a grant of bibles and testaments, which enabled him to place a copy of the Scriptures in every Gipsy dwelling.

"A few of the Gipsies still travel the country, dealing in earthenware, horn spoons, baskets, heather brooms, and mats; but the strictness with which they

are watched by the police prevents any exercise of their thieving talents. From the improved state of the district, there are few waste places for them to pitch their camps; and the raising a fire on the roadside is certain to be visited with fine and imprisonment. They cannot now remain in idleness, and are forced to apply themselves to some occupation, to procure daily bread. A number of the men are become labourers, and, mixing with the population, acquire their habits, and marry out of their tribe. The Gipsy girls, too, are beginning to leave their tribe, and engage as domestic servants and bondagers, and occasionally marry farm-servants.

Their houses are now more comfortable—instead of the stone and straw-beds—stools, chairs, tables, and the ordinary country beds, are to be seen in many of the dwellings. There can be little doubt that the original race is fast falling off, and that ere many years run their course the Oriental blood will have ceased to flow. The days of the Gipsy have passed away."

This account of the Gipsy's status in Scotland, is but the reflection of what, in process of time, will happen elsewhere. In England it is already the case; and as civilization advances, and the waste lands of other countries are brought into cultivation, the Gipsy, in self-defence, will be compelled to forsake his ancient mode of life; and intercourse with the world will, however slowly, end by moulding him to the pattern of other men, as surely as the constant friction of the ocean's tide rubs down the angularities of stones cast on shore, until they become as round and smooth as other pebbles on the beach. Besides, human sympathies and kindly feelings are now awakened for, not denied to, these poor outcasts. The days are gone by when the Gipsy was reckoned no better than an animal, and shot down, as a Gipsy woman and her child were a century ago, by a hunting party in Germany, with as little concern, and less excitement, than the game they were in

pursuit of. We have seen, in this country at least, that fair, kind treatment brings out the better parts of their character, they can be grateful, and farmers who have befriended them, have rarely suffered from their depredations.

The old tales of their child-stealing propensities, which so long made them the terror of loving parents, although not quite false, are known now to have been grossly exaggerated. In Spain, at one time, there is little doubt that they did, when opportunity offered, possess themselves of young children; not, however, for the reasons popularly attributed to them, but for the object, horrible to relate, of selling them as slaves to the Moors. In this country it is very doubtful whether such an odious trade ever was, or could be, carried on.

The history of the Gipsies will always be a curious episode in the world's story; but having attempted to solve the mystery of their origin, we may now occupy ourselves more profitably by endeavouring to ameliorate their condition, and improve their manners, than by studying them as they were, when they present, although a curious, an humiliating and degraded picture of humanity.





CHAPTER XVIII.

CHARLES RETURNS TO SCHOOL—PICKING AND DRYING THE
HOPS—THE DRIVE—THE MOAT—POCKETING THE HOPS—
A NUTTING EXPEDITION—AN ALARM AND A FALL—THE
LAST OF THE HOPS—A BONFIRE—GOOD BYE.

THE day of Charles' departure arrived ; his father was to go with him as far as the Red Hill station, where he would change the train, and then proceed alone to his destination ; he carried one consolation with him, in the shape of a large cricket bat, purchased at Penhurst, that his father had given him, and which it had long been his ambition to possess ; he felt satisfied that all the fellows at school would admire and appreciate this piece of property ; and that he should be made much of for the sake of his bat, which he might lend to those he liked, but firmly withhold from that odious Jones, or that 'sneak Harris ;' full of these reflections and anticipations, as they drove along, he was able to feel resigned to his fate ; but the saying good bye to Mamma and Jane, who had driven with him to the Tunbridge station, rather upset him again.

However, all things have an end, and Jane and her mother felt, as they returned home, that Charles' sorrow would not, in all probability, be of long duration.

"We shall miss him much, poor fellow ; he is so good tempered and merry," said Jane.

"That we shall," responded her mother.

"We are such a large party, one would hardly think that the loss of one could make so much difference," said Jane.

"I have observed," answered her mother, "that the absence of one member of a family is just as much felt and noticed by a large, as by a smaller party."

"Oh Mamma!" exclaimed Jane, interrupting her; "do look out upon the road, there is such an immense crowd of people coming; who can they be?"

Mrs. Carteret looked, and saw at some little distance in front of them a number of people coming towards them; there might be forty or fifty of them, perhaps more, straggling along the road; as soon as they came up to them, she saw that the crowd was composed of men women, and children, of all ages, and sizes; some little things carried like bundles on their mothers' backs; others trying to keep up by a running step; but the whole set of them, most forlorn, dirty, and wretched in appearance; some few were certainly tolerably clothed, but the greater proportion were in a truly deplorable condition; as nearly all, however, carried a bundle of some sort, it was possible, thought Mrs. Carteret, that they might have better garments with them.

"Who and what are these people?" she inquired of their driver.

"Hop pickers, Ma'am. They come out of the borough, or the suburbs of London; we shall meet plenty more of them, I dare say. They come down by hundreds every year about this time, walking all the way, and sleeping under the hedges or in barns, or where they can."

"Poor creatures, they look dreadfully poor," said Jane.

"They don't look all so bad, as them, Miss," replied the driver. "Them are mostly Irish, a low lot, I dare say. There's many very 'spectable fam'ly comes down in a fine year like this, when they can make as much money as they will, a fine season like this."

"Do they make much then?" asked Mrs. Carteret.

"Oh, yes, Ma'am, in a year like this, when the hops are large, they can pick 'em quick. These sort of pickers are paid by the bushel, so the more they pick

the more they get, and sometimes they take back enough to keep them through the winter."

"Poor things! but what do they do with all the children?"

"Oh, they pick too; except the little uns."

"It's a long way for 'em to walk!" continued the man, "but the country air does 'em good."

"Adieu to my ideas of picturesque hop pickers," said Jane.

A few days after, Mr. Price began to pick his hops; his garden had been in full beauty, and the show of fruit magnificent; and the girls had often walked there that they might admire the pretty effect of the sun breaking through the long and innumerable arched avenues, formed by the hops twining and interlacing with each other over head.

As soon as the morning lessons and occupations were disposed of, a visit to the hop field was proposed, and the whole party started accordingly; and as Mr. Price only employed the people from the neighbouring villages, Mr. and Mrs. Carteret had no scruples about going amongst them. A considerable corner of the field was cleared when they got there.

"But this really is a pretty sight," exclaimed Jane. "After all my fears, this long row of women and children, standing in front of their bins, the men moving about, and the tall hops behind them, make a pretty picture."

"Shall we go up to them and see the bins?" inquired Laura.

"Certainly," said her mother. But they stopped on their way, to watch a man who was taking up the hops; he had an iron instrument in his hand, consisting of a knife on one side, with which he cut the stems of the plant near the ground, and a hook on the other, with which he pulled up the pole, and then carried it off to be ready for the pickers. This tool, the men told them, was called a hop dog. The pickers were all women, both young and old, healthy and happy looking,

very different from the poor pedestrians from London. To judge from their laughing and talking, they did not dislike their occupation; but as Mr. Carteret and his party approached, they rather hushed their voices, out of respect, and answered all his questions readily and civilly. The bins were canvas bags, stretched out on poles, four square, supported by wooden rests of a convenient height. The hop pole was laid across the bin, and as soon as the hops were all picked off, thrown down on the ground, and room made for another, as the space around them began to be cleared, they removed bins and all to another part of the field; the bin when empty, collapsing, and being easily carried. Each of the bins could contain a certain quantity of hops, and an account of what each person had picked, was made out at the end of the day, and kept until the time when they were paid for the whole of their work.

Whilst the young people were standing and looking at all this, a good looking young woman came up to Mrs. Carteret, and dropping her curtsey, asked her, "If the gentleman would pay his footing?"

Mrs. Carteret turned to her husband with a look of surprise, not knowing what this meant; but he seemed to understand it, for he took half a crown out of his pocket, and putting it into the woman's hand, said "this must be for all." She thanked him with evident pleasure, and showed what she had got to her companions. Mr. Carteret explained to his wife that hop pickers expected when strangers came into a field, that they should pay their footing, or in other words, give them something to drink."

As soon as the bins were full, their contents were emptied into large sacks and carried off to the Oast-house; and thither our party proceeded when tired of the field.

"How very different the country will look when all the hops are gone and the fields are as bare as in winter," said Laura.

"But here comes Mr. Price. A busy time, Mr. Price!"

"Aye, aye, Sir! but a glorious season, Sir. Will your young people like to see the hops drying?"

"If you please, Mr. Price, we were just going to see your kiln."

"Then, come along with me, young ladies; I have got both my furnaces lighted, charcoal fires you know, with a little coke, and they'll be going day and night, I expect, for the next four or five days."

"All night, too!" cried Ada.

"Yes Miss, all night, as long as I have hops to dry."

"Then the poor men can't go to bed?"

"Ada, you goose," said Hugh, "the same men don't work all day and all night, they change about of course."

"A good many of my men work on into the night; sleeping two or three hours, and then getting up while the others sleep," said Mr. Price.

"Hard work," said Mrs. Carteret.

"Yes, Ma'am, but high pay; then it is only for a short time, you know."

By this time they had reached the Oast-house, and went up into the packing or cooling room, as the loft was called, to see the drying rooms above the furnaces, where the hops were laid two or three feet deep, on a floor of wire frames covered with canvas, the hot air ascending from the furnaces below, through the hops, dried them slowly and gradually.

The men turned them over and over, and as soon as they considered they were quite dry, and every particle of moisture taken out of them, they were shovelled into the cooling room, ready for the packer.

"How yellow they look now," said Hugh.

"Yes," said Jane, "yellower even than before they were dried, and I thought them very yellow then."

"Their golden hue is preserved, and perhaps increased by some people, throwing a little brimstone into the fire," answered Mr. Price, "but I do not do so myself."

"A fine mixture to be roasted in," whispered Hugh to his sisters, "fire and brimstone."

"Hush," said Laura, the discreet.

"We shall begin to pack in a few days," said Mr. Price; and taking up a board, he showed them a circular hole in the floor, with a strong iron frame round it, to which the long sacks, called pockets, were fastened, hanging down into the stowage place below; and which when full, were unhooked, fastened up at the mouth, and dropped below.

"They are packed thus, close and tight, by a man treading them in," said Mr. Price.

"He must get into the sacks to do that," said Hugh.

"Yes, Sir, he must; and pretty hard work it is."

"It must resemble the grape pressing," said Mr. Carteret, "only I suppose your hop-pressers have shoes on."

"That they have; heavy clumped shoes; but the young gentlemen and ladies must come and see them at work."

"That we will," they all exclaimed, as they disappeared in different directions; Hugh going to the hop field again, to do a little hop picking, he said. Ada to her rabbits, Jane to her flowers, Laura to a short walk with her father.

"The days are beginning to close in now," said Mrs. Carteret, who joined them, "I think we had better take advantage of the fine weather whilst it lasts, to drive in the direction we have not yet taken. Shall I order a carriage for to-morrow afternoon?"

"With all my heart;" replied Mrs. Carteret. "I think the country will look particularly lively just now, with the hop-picking going on."

"Perhaps next summer, Laura, you may have an opportunity of comparing the hop season, with the vintage," said her father, as they were driving along next day. Laura's eyes sparkled with pleasure at the thought; but as she turned and pointed to a hop garden they were passing, she said, "I don't think any

scene can be prettier than that, the ground rises there so picturesquely, and seen at this distance, the poverty or ugliness of the hop-pickers is not visible, one only notices the charming effect they make scattered over the ground."

"You speak with an artist's feeling, Laura," said her father, "but I am quite ready to confess that a vineyard in itself is not to be compared to a hop-garden. On the Rhine, however, they have great beauty of situation, clothing, as they do, ledges of bare rocks, which are often crowned by an old ruin, and with the dark deep river flowing below them."

"I long to go," exclaimed Laura, "but can hardly enjoy any summer more than I have done this summer here,"

"That is well," said her mother, "you have youth, health, and good spirits, three things that should make everything in life a source of enjoyment and thankfulness; when people who have these blessings are not happy, you may be sure that they lack a contented spirit and a grateful heart, the fault is in themselves, not in their circumstances."

"There are two sorts of people," said Mr. Carteret, "who seem determined to make themselves miserable, and never enjoy the present moment; those who are always longing for better things than they have, and looking forward to some impossible event to give them that, and those who are always regretting the past, lamenting what they did do, and what they did not do; both waste life equally. There never was a wiser, more philosophic, admonition, than 'sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' Each day brings its own burden; are we not fools to try and make it heavier; over care for the future, anxious fears about what may never happen, and too much sorrow for the past,—even though it be for having misused it, and wasted it,—are very heavy weights to hang on to our daily duties."

Little children are great examples to us; when their trouble is over they do not refuse to be comforted

or pleased; their loving natures, warm with a kind word again, and break out into merriment; while we, silly grown up children, too often nurse our sorrows, or our cares, and refuse to partake of the means of enjoyment scattered around us, or to be glad again, even though a beneficent Creator pleads the cause of happiness with us."

"Oh Papa! I see that it is wrong," said Laura, earnestly, for she was apt to be a little morbid at times. "I see that a loving heart is really a grateful heart. I pray God to keep mine so."

"Amen! my dear child," said her father affectionately, "and now let me practice as well as preach, and look round and enjoy this pretty country."

"Master Hugh, don't canter your pony so close to the wheels, or you'll have an accident." Burr-r-r-r! "What was that, a covey of partridges? Why, Hugh, your pony was pointing, I declare; how he stopped and put his ears up."

"His conduct was more pointed than agreeable," answered Hugh. "That sudden stop of his nearly threw me over his head. What fine birds; did you see them? There were nine of them. I wish I had a gun."

"Do look?" cried Jane, "what an immense number of nuts there are in these hedges; we really must come some day and gather them."

"Let us have a regular nutting party, and take the nuts home to the maids," cried Ada.

"Very well," said Hugh, "we will get the Veryans to come out some day with us."

The drive, hitherto, had been varied enough; now over a bit of broken common ground, now through a rich plantation, or pleasant little hamlet, with its road-side inn, but latterly, for more than a mile, through a narrow lane, with steep banks and luxuriant hedges, they were gradually descending from the high ground, and at last, after a sharp turn and steep descent, the driver brought his horses to a stand still, and turning about, said, "There, ladies, is the Moat."

Down in this secluded woody vale, was the Moat, a curious, picturesque manor-house, its four sides rising sharply out of the still waters surrounding it, with its gatehouse, bridge, and many odd shaped windows, gables, and twisted chimneys. It was entirely open to the road on one side, but on two other sides the ground was laid out in gardens, trim, neat, and cared for in a manner that showed the old house was still some one's cherished home. A rivulet running through the grounds, fed the Moat, which was deep and dark, and free from the green and stagnant matter of such waters in general.

They had come so suddenly and unexpectedly upon this scene, that the whole party were taken by surprise.

"It must be the very 'lonely Moated Grange' of Mariana," at last exclaimed Jane.

"But not at all the place to feel a weary and dreary in," answered Laura, "it is so bright and quaint and cosy looking."

"It is now, Miss! on this fine day," said the driver, "but on a winter's day, when it's snowing and raining, it is a lonesome place, indeed."

"Very damp, I should think, from its Moat and low situation," said Mr. Carteret, "but can't we get out and walk round it?"

"Oh yes, sir."

They all got out. "I thought," said Hugh, "it was only old castles that had moats round them."

"In early days, many of the manor houses were moated for purposes of defence, but it is very seldom you see a specimen of a house like this, where the Moat has been preserved and not filled up! They asked permission of a servant whom they now saw, to pass over the bridge into the court. The greater part of the house was evidently of the Tudor style. But the servant told them a good portion of it was built in Edward the Second's reign; unfortunately, as his master

and mistress were not at home, he could not show them over the house; he called their attention as they came out of the court, to some buildings in front, originally forming another court; one side of which only now remained; they were of that curious mixture of wood work and plaster, peculiar to Queen Elizabeth's age; the ground between them and the house was laid out as a lawn, and was connected by a walk, with the sloping lawn and gardens on the other side; the place was so surrounded by steep and thickly wooded slopes that it could not be seen from any point but the one from which they had first observed it.

It formed a pleasant little episode in their drive, and gave rise to a great deal of talk about old houses and old times, at once instructive and amusing.

When they returned to the farm, they found Mrs. Veryan and her children there, who had walked over to see them, and readily accepted the invitation to remain and spend the rest of the evening.

The nutting party was proposed and discussed.

"No time like the present," said Edgar, "let us go to-morrow afternoon. I know of some woods much nearer than your lanes, where they are in hundreds."

So accordingly the affair was settled for the next day. But the next day was wet, so the Veryans did not come, and the young Carterets were disposed to grumble at the weather.

"You are unreasonable, my dear children," said their mother, "your walk is unimportant, and can well be put off to another time; be thankful you are not obliged to be out. Think of the poor hoppers, standing on the damp ground in all this pouring rain."

"Oh, poor things, we had quite forgotten them; how sorry we are; how wretched it must be, very different from what it was yesterday, when they all seemed so happy—the weather looks better, perhaps it will clear."

And happily it did, and from that light sandy soil, before very long, every trace of the heavy rain had

passed away; the nutting expedition was at an end for that day; but they were glad to be able to get out, as they had now only a fortnight longer to remain at the farm. In the course of the afternoon Hugh rushed into the sitting room crying—

“Oh girls, do come out into the yard; they are packing the hops, and its the funniest sight in the world to see the man in the sack bobbing about—do come.”

No second appeal was needed, all hastened to the farm yard; the large doors that closed the packing room above the open place below, called the stowage, were open, so that they saw not only the long sack hanging down, but the head of the man who was in it, above the floor of the upper room, and odd it did look, indeed, to see nothing but this head jumping up and down, as he ran round and round to press the hops equally down on all sides; when he wanted more hops, he reached out an arm, took hold of a wooden rake (the hoe), and raked in some from the heaps near him; then began his dancing process again, sometimes holding on the floor with both his hands, it seemed hard and tiring work, but as they watched him from below, the pocket gradually filled, and first his shoulders, then his waist, and at last very nearly his whole figure appeared above; then they went up stairs into the room themselves, saw the last hops pressed down on the now full pocket, then saw it lifted from its iron frame, the mouth dexterously closed, sewn up, and the corners twisted round, and the pocket put into the stowage below; a hard, tight, compact solid mass, upon which pinching with the hand and sitting upon made no sort of impression.

Another empty pocket was adjusted and another man began the same process. The hands, face, and clothes of the first man were perfectly yellow; “he looks,” said Hugh, “as if he had been dusted with brimstone.”

The young people found this so amusing, that they staid there almost all the afternoon, and assisted to

rake in the dry hops which lay in heaps upon the floor. Mr. Price told them that in some places the packing was done by machinery, when the hops lay of course even closer than those packed by men. The picking in the fields was to finish that day ; but the drying would not be over, owing to the rain, so soon as they had hoped ; Mr. Price, however, seemed very well satisfied with the results of the season, as it was called. When the packing was over, he gave all his people a supper, and paid them their gains ; and a very happy supper it generally proved to all of them, after a good season, for hop picking then was a profitable affair.

Hugh found considerable amusement, and occupation also later, in helping to saw off the ends of the hop poles, which, when all the other work was done, were collected together ; the ends rotten, from being long in the ground, were sawn off, and the poles stacked for next year. The withered plant, of course, had first to be stripped off and was left in large bundles on the ground ; but of that more by and bye.

The next day, early in the afternoon, the three Veryans appeared, each with their crooked stick and basket. Ada and Mary were excessively anxious to be of the party, and as Hugh promised to take care of them himself, and not to go far, they were allowed to join, and all set off in high spirits, under Edgar's guidance.

" Won't you have a basket, Hugh ? " asked Ada, " I can lend you one."

" No, thank you ; I shall make my handkerchief my basket, it is much the most convenient thing ; because, if your basket has no cover your nuts fall out as fast as you gather them ; and if it has a cover, you are obliged to be opening and shutting it every minute ; now you see I hold the four corners of my handkerchief together, and have a little opening between each to pop the nuts in.

Away they went, over the meadows, through the lanes, over stiles, and through hedges. Nuts they

saw in every direction, but Edgar always begged them to wait, as in *his* wood they were so much finer. At last they came to the copse wood in question; Edgar was right, there was a plentiful harvest there; the village boys had not yet found them out, or had those more serious depredators—the people who regularly visit Kent for the sake of her cob nuts. Hugh, according to promise, was all good nature to the two little girls; pulling down the top branches for them, and letting them pick off the nuts, whilst Edgar boldly climbed the trees, sometimes perching upon a branch that bent beneath his weight; and often narrowly escaping a fall.

This copse was not of very large extent, so they wandered about as they liked, without fear of being lost, as in the green lanes and on the commons; an hour glided away, when they were suddenly startled by a shot fired very near to them.

"Hollo," cried Hugh, "somebody shooting very near here; we may chance to come in for a peppering if we don't look out." So saying, he rushed to the edge of the plantation, which was divided from the high road by a ditch and hedge; and looking over, saw in a corn-field opposite to them, two men with guns, and a dog, and almost at the same time he saw a covey of young birds cross the road about a hundred yards higher up, and enter the other end of the plantation in which he was. "How slowly they fly; if I had been near I could have knocked one over with my hat," said Hugh to himself, as he pointed them out to the men, who were close to the other hedge, and begged them to be careful, as a party of children were in the copse.

"Aye! aye! master, never fear," said one, who was evidently a game keeper; "but do you know that you are trespassing? That's Squire Lee's plantation, and he won't have any one there, if he knows it; I'll be bound you found the gate locked."

"Yes, we got over it."

"Well, I advise you to get over again, as soon as may be."

"We were gathering nuts."

"Worse and worse, if he hears of it, he will be in a fine passion; he won't have a boy there, or a nut picked, because it pulls the trees to pieces." •

"I suppose that is the reason we found so many nuts; but, of course, if it is not permitted to gather them, the sooner we go the better."

"Decidedly, for you see I'm the keeper, and if I meet him, which perhaps I might do, I'm bound to say, Squire, there's boys in the hazel copse, and then if he catches you, I wouldn't be in your shoes."

"Thanks for the hint, we'll be off."

So Hugh turned round to summon his forces and beat a retreat.

His call was soon answered; Laura and the little girls thought it more prudent to depart at once; and Hugh told them to walk slowly on, whilst he waited for the others; unfortunately Edgar, Jane, and Edith took it into their heads to hide; and Hugh ran about, hot and tired, without finding them; at last, quite wearied, he called out in a loud voice, that "he was going, and that if Squire Lee caught them, it was no fault of his."

Without knowing it, he happened to be close to their hiding place, and Edgar hearing this, said—

"I did not know we were in one of old Lee's copses, but if we are, the sooner we are off the better, he is a dreadful old fellow,—come along, both of you, as quick as you can."

"But where are Laura and the children?" said Edith. •

"Gone on, I dare say; come, don't delay."

They soon reached the gate, got over it, and saw Hugh some little distance on before them; a turn in the road, a moment after hid him from sight, and just as they reached this turn in the road, they came suddenly upon a strange looking little old man, upon an

old but strong built pony, he looked fixedly at the three, with their sticks and basketful of nuts, but said nothing; as soon as he was gone and fairly out of hearing, Edgar broke out with:—

“By jove we’re lucky; who do you think that was? why old Lee himself; I would not have gone into his copse for five pounds if I had known it; he could have taken us and locked us up for the night as soon as not.”

“Pray let us get home as fast as we can;” said Jane, hurrying on.

“Oh! there is no fear now, we are off his ground now; but there are the others waiting for us.”

Hugh was rather wrath with them when they reached him, for their stupid folly, as he called it, in hiding away just as they were wanted. However, peace was soon made, and ere long they reached the farm, and found Mr. and Mrs. Carteret and Mrs. Veryan walking to meet them. Ada ran joyfully forward to show her treasures, when unfortunately her foot slipped on a rolling stone, she fell violently forward, the nuts flying in every direction. Mrs. Carteret hastened to her.

“My dear child you have fallen on your face. I hope you have not knocked your poor nose again.” (Ada was always knocking her little nose.)

“Oh no, it’s my arm, I have hurt my arm,” said the poor child, crying and trembling from fright.

Mrs. Carteret looked and saw that her arm was very severely grazed; knowing that Ada was nervous, she instantly wrapped her own soft handkerchief round the wound, and took her into the house to wash out the gravel with a little warm water. “But my nuts, my nuts,” said Ada.

“Never mind your nuts, Ada, we will pick them all up,” said the rest.

When they reached the house, good natured Mrs. Price came, all kindness and sorrow; gently was the poor bruised and wounded arm cleansed with warm

water, and then Mrs. Price suggested, when she went to bed, a poultice being applied; "after which," said she, "I have a magic leaf, which will act like a charm, keep the arm cool, and prevent a hard skin forming; will you, Ma'am, let me take this poor little arm under my charge?" (to Mrs. Carteret.)

Mrs. Carteret looked at Ada, who said; "Yes, Mamma; I am sure Mrs. Price can do my arm good, because her own grandchild had a bad fall, and she did everything for her so well."

"Very well, then, Ada, I shall leave you in Mrs. Price's hands; you had better have your arm tied up now to rest it; when that is done, have your things taken off and come to tea."

The Carterets were much pleased, one and all, to hear that the poor Gipsy woman with the bad leg was much better; her husband had been at the Rectory that day to fetch some little comforts ordered for her, the wound was fast healing, and she was hopeful and felt stronger, the man seemed very grateful; all this was pleasant and satisfactory.

"The doctor told me," said Mrs. Veryan, "that the mischief in the leg had been much aggravated by the neglect and incorrigibly dirty habits of these people, and that if the woman had not had what he called a Gipsy constitution of health and vigour, it might have ended in her being obliged to have the leg off."

"I think we did a great deed in getting the old woman to wash the wound at once," observed Mrs. Carteret.

It was now the middle of September. In another week this happy family party were to bid good bye to the pretty farmyard, and return to London. Miss Murray was to be there to receive them; regular hours and regular employment were to recommence; the days were closing in, the weather breaking, but the prospect of leaving the country was very unwelcome to them. Mrs. Carteret allowed her daughters a complete holiday, and perfect liberty, during

their last week, and the days flew rapidly away; every favourite haunt was visited, and taken leave of; every bird and beast in the farmyard specially petted and fed.

Now the hops were all packed, and only waiting to be sent off to the market; Mr. Price was getting even his corn thrashed out, and this sometimes drew them to the yard. Mr. Price declared himself to be old-fashioned in his farming; he still preferred the flail to the machines so universally used.

One day, when they went off in the morning to the barn, Ada to steal a handful of the new barley for her dear chickens, Mr. Price met them, and asked them if they would like to see the hop samples cut out of the pockets; they followed him accordingly to the Oast-house, and there, in the stowage place, they found three men at work; one opened a seam about midway in the sack, the second man then took a cutter, and neatly and dexterously cut out a solid cube of hops; the sack was then sewn up, and the cube handed to the third man, who folded it neatly up in half-a-sheet of brown paper, and numbered the parcel; a cube of this sort was taken out of every pocket of hops, and they looked like a number of little brown boxes, all exactly the same size and shape.

"These little parcels are my samples," said Mr. Price, "which I take up to London with me to-morrow, and if the hop-merchant approves them, I send him my hops to sell."

"Who would have believed that the large hanging branches of hops would ever have come to this?" said Laura, as she handled one of the samples.

"They remind one of the tablets of dried vegetables we saw in the London shops a year or two ago," said Jane.

The next thing that astonished them, was to hear the value of the hops they saw before them—there were at least, Mr. Price said, £1500 worth, and perhaps he might sell them for £2,000.

"Then," said Hugh, "a pocket of hops would be quite a handsome present to make a man."

Mr. Price laughed as he wished them good bye for the afternoon.

The last day arrived. They were all busy packing up and preparing for their departure early the next morning, and they wished to have everything ready before the evening, because the Veryans were coming to take leave of them; they too were to return to Cornwall very soon, and Mr. Roberts was quite melancholy at the prospect of losing both families so nearly at the same time; however, everyone determined to be merry and cheerful the last evening.

"How is the poor arm, Ada?" inquired Mrs. Veryan.

"Nearly well now; it was poulticed, and then Mrs. Price bound a large leaf on it she called heal-all, which kept it very cool and nice; but it was a bad place," answered Ada.

"Indeed it was," said her mother, "bruised as well as grazed; but she bore it well, and as it has been her only accident during three months running and tumbling about, and climbing trees, &c., I suppose we may consider her fortunate to have escaped so well."

Immediately after tea Edgar and Hugh disappeared mysteriously; the latter whispering something to his mother before leaving the room, she smiled, but said nothing. About a quarter of an hour afterwards, going up to the window, which opened upon the front of the house, she pulled up the blind, and looked out. It was a threatening looking evening, the clouds lying low, and driving rapidly through the air; sometimes the moon appeared touching their edges with silver, sometimes she was hidden from view.

"I fear we shall have a wet day for our journey home to-morrow," was her remark.

"The glass is not low," said Mr. Carteret, getting up and joining her, "but bless me, what have we here? a bonfire!"

The whole party rushed to the window, in time to see the bonfire blazing up magnificently, lighting up the scenery around.

"Why, it is Edgar and Hugh; and now they are letting off some squibs, and now some one is firing a gun," cried Ada, quite excited.

"I think I had better go out and see that no mischief is done," said Mr. Carteret.

But no mischief ensued. Mr. Price was there, good naturedly firing off a few blank charges, to give effect to the scene; and again and again the fire blazed up, giving that dark mysterious effect to the figures beside it, that fire always does; the lowering and stormy aspect of the night, added to the effect of the scene.

"I suppose all this," said Laura, "is in honour of our departure; but as bonfires are generally used for rejoicings, and we are so sorry to go, it is hardly appropriate."

"Yes, bonfires are the most ancient mode of rejoicing, and there is nothing prettier," said Mrs. Carteret, "than on certain Saints' days in Tyrol and Switzerland, to see the bonfires burning on the mountain tops. St. Martin's feast is a great day in some parts; and the shepherds, who spend their summers on the Alpine pastures with their goats and cattle, amuse themselves for days before hand in collecting and carrying up fuel to a spitz or peak, for their bonfires; and then, as soon as night comes on, you see them lighting up for miles, answering each other as it were, sometimes the whole scene being reflected in a lake below. It has a wondrously strange, almost solemn effect."

"That I can quite imagine," replied Mrs. Vervan. "Bonfires seem to be an universal method of celebrating great events. I was reading the other day, that owing to the practice of firing the prairie among the North American Indians, who make theirs on a grand scale, the sacrifice of timber is enormous. "If

a war party returns, or a hunting party starts," these event sare celebrated by "firing the prairie," and thus the growth of centuries is destroyed for ever. But now our boys' bonfire is blazing up again; they too must be burning an immense deal of wood." ♡

Long after Mrs. Carteret and Mrs. Veryan^o had retired from the window, the young ones remained watching the fire, as it sometimes seemed to slumber and smoulder away, then burst out into magnificent flames, sending down showers of sparks; they would never have tired of noting its effect upon the sky and scene around; but at last Mr. Carteret came in, his hands and face black with smoke, and said:—

"Well, you have seen the last of the hops now; what do you think we have been burning? the old plants themselves, the Bine."

"They have made a glorious finale at all events."

"And this bonfire must be our finale," said Mrs. Veryan, as she took her leave, "to many pleasant hours, and an acquaintance that will not, I hope, end here."

"Good bye, good bye," was heard on every side.

All were up early next morning. Ada to feed her rabbits for the last time; they were to be fetched away that day by the village girl to whom she had given them,—Jane, to cut a nosegay from the flowers in the conservatory; to carry the old toad out into the garden, lest he should get trod upon when she was gone; and to pack up two favourite little ferns that she thought might live in London,—and Laura, that she might collect and distribute to some poor people near the remains of their household stores of tea, sugar, candles, &c., together with some left off clothing, treasures to those who receive them; Hugh was up, too, that his father might have his dish of mushrooms for the last time. Breakfast was over, the carriage, a large open break, that had brought them down, was at the door, the luggage sent on, the cloaks and shawls put in.

· “ ‘Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest,’ is my motto,” said worthy Mrs. Price, “the day will not hold out long, but you may drive to the station dry if you do not delay.”

· “Jump in then, children,” said their father.

Soon the carriage swept round the little lawn, whilst a chorus of young voices said farewell to the farm and its kind possessors; soon they passed the gates, and soon reached that point in the road from which the old house might once again be seen, when they all stood up to take one last look at it, and say one more—Good bye.

THE END.



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